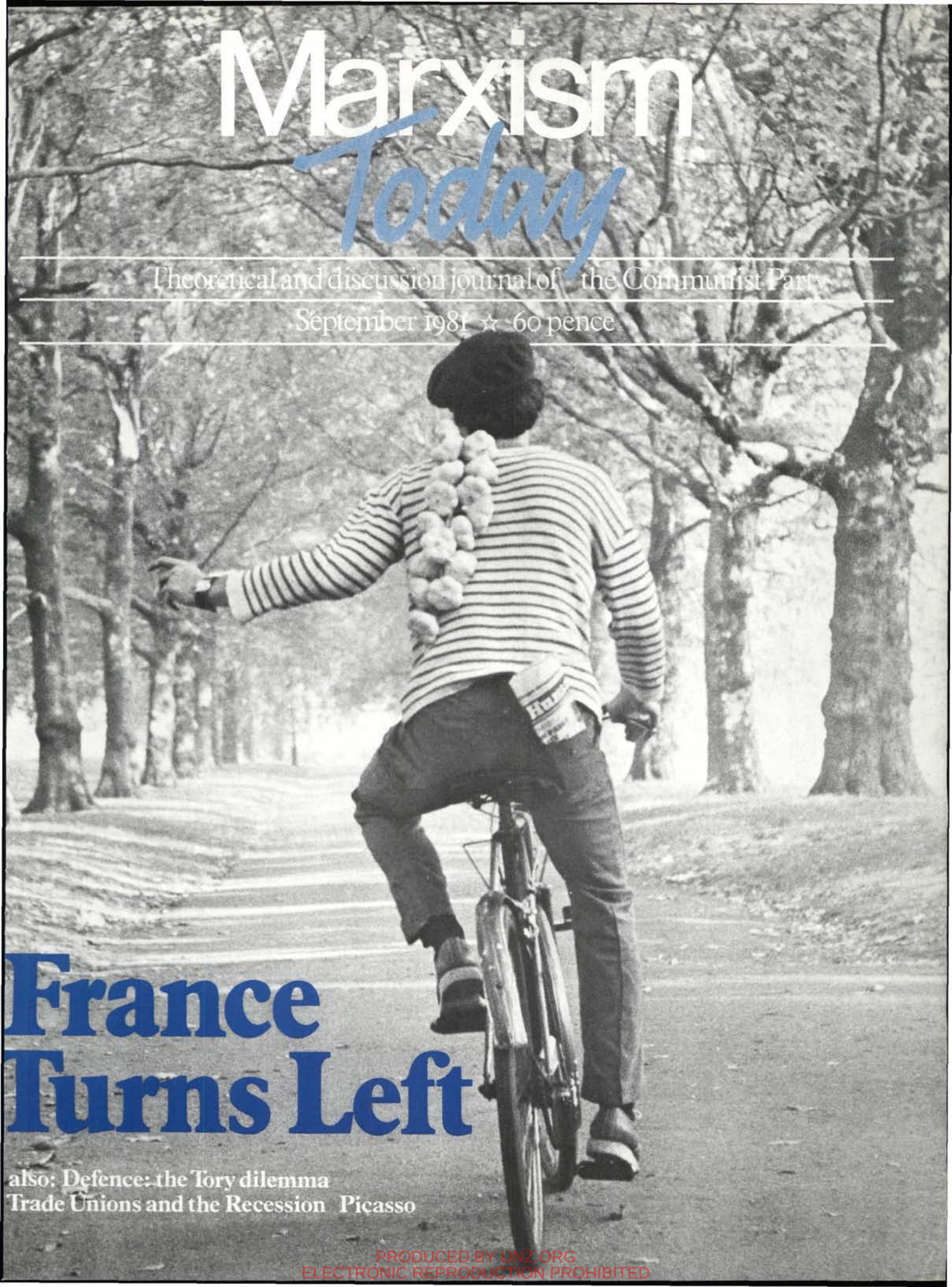

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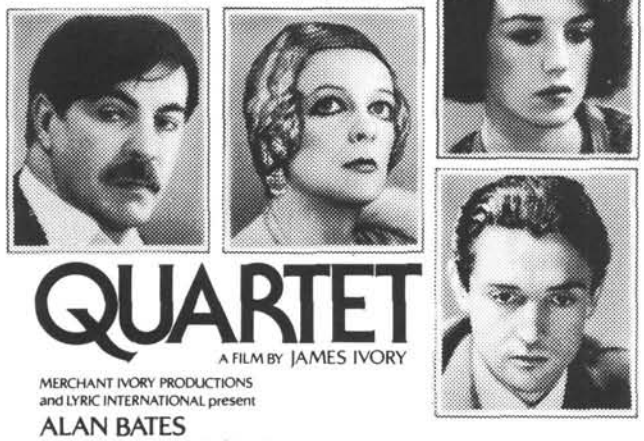

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THE TORY ATTACK ON TRAINING

Never before have the economic and social aspects of manpower policy been so confused in Britain. This confusion serves to conceal the scale of the attack on industrial training and the shift in emphasis from intervention in longer-term manpower policy (like skill training) to short-term palliatives for mass unemployment.

As far as the training aspects of manpower policy are concerned, we are now in the third stage of post-war Tory policy. In 1964 the Tories initiated the Industrial Training Act, recognising that market forces could not satisfactorily reproduce a skilled labour force, and giving Industrial Training Boards (ITBs) substantial powers to intervene and raise industry's training efforts. By the early 1970s the Tories had taken fright at this fairly radical (and democratic) approach to industrial training. The 1973 Employment and Training Act reduced the powers of ITBs, made them partly dependent on public funds (and so vulnerable to later public spending cuts) and set up the bureaucratic Manpower Services Commission (MSC) to coordinate public employment and training services and make these much more an arm of central government. Present Tory thinking is 1950s vintage as far as training is concerned, with the monetarist view added on: training should be left to market forces which will respond so long as young workers are not too highly priced. The new youth employment subsidy is thus largely an invitation to employers to pay low rates or cut minimum rates for young employees. Tagged on is the cynicism which says the government should be seen to 'be doing something' in response to mass unemployment and riots in English cities, and which has led to increased funds for the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP).

There seem to be three main aspects to the present policy on training: First, the changing role of the MSC; second, the attack on ITBs and retreat from an active training policy; third, the attack on skill (which is part of the attempt to strengthen the employers in industrial relations).

First, although initially opposed by the trade unions, the MSC has nevertheless been treated gently by many on the left who saw in it an embryonic manpower planning agency. The basis of this view is shakier now than ever before. Planned MSC expenditure up to 1984/85[1] shows a decline in employment services and cuts to the Training Opportunities Programme (TOPS) and Direct Training Services, the only MSC activities which directly involve skill training of any kind. *Before* the recently-announced increase of some £300m, the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) was planned to swallow a third of total MSC resources by 1984/85. The MSC is becoming more and more a body which offers hollow 'Opportunities' to the unemployed. As we know, Yoppers generally

receive artificial jobs or replace real employment, get very low allowances (£23.50 per week) and hardly any proper training, and find it difficult to get themselves kept on by employers once the cheap labour period is over. No doubt employers are pleased with the 'Opportunity' to be subsidised in this way.

While YOP is a reality to which the labour movement and youth must respond, we must not permit the YOP philosophy to determine our policies for the crisis facing young people.

Second, ITBs, by contrast have been effective in relation to skill training, have been decentralised and democratic, and have allowed trade unions real influence. By a system of levy grant based on statutory powers, ITBs raised the level of training by firms in their industries and secured a commitment to improve the *quality* of training. In major industries like engineering, ITBs brought in new systems which successfully replaced the old 'time-serving' approach to training with a modern system of training to nationally approved and tested standards. Skills became 'transferable' between firms, to the benefit of workers, union strength, and the economy. Recognising these achievements, the TUC has called for extension of the ITB system[2] beyond the 50% of workers presently covered.

The MSC has now completed its sector-by-sector review of training, recommending retention of 7 major statutory ITBs, but making no firm recommendation on the other 17. In the meantime, Mr Prior has gained through the 1981 Employment and Training Act, powers to abolish ITBs without consulting Parliament. Since the Minister is not bound by MSC recommendation, we can expect to see vigorous lobbying by employers who want their board to be wound up, made purely 'voluntary', or placed under their control with no union influence. While this is going on, some ITBs may be forced to close shop when their public funding is stopped at Xmas 1981.

Third, some time ago the Central Policy Review Staff suggested absurdly that apprenticeship, indeed the concept of skill, could only be understood as a trade union 'restrictive practice'. Taking this idea to heart, the Tories have stepped up the ideological and economic attack on skill, in the first instance cutting ITB funding but making no provision for an orderly return to the realistic employer levies of the 1964 system. Unfortunately certain woolly notions contained in the influential MSC New Training Initiative could give support to the Tory stance.

Cynical comparisons with W Germany are used as a basis for these arguments. In W Germany, young people have the right to receive further education, in the course of which most receive some vocational training which is relevant to a particular industrial sector. Not that the Tories are interested in expanding education: their interest in W Germany is that trade unions have no influence over the training system, and that young people receive only low state allowances and are excluded from trade unionism.

WEST GERMAN PEACE MOVEMENT

By providing for a stagnation or even 'a slight reduction in real terms' (the *Guardian* 31 July 1981) of West Germany's military expenditure — and thus failing to meet NATO's target of annual 3% increases — the Schmidt Government's recent budget proposals may have raised a few eyebrows in the Pentagon and perhaps even hopes among peace campaigners abroad. But in Britain, at least, the experience of Thatcher's defence cuts on the navy's surface fleet in order to finance the submarine madness of the nuclear Trident system should guard against misreading such news from abroad: certainly, in West Germany itself, nobody was fooled into believing that the proposals reflected

[1] MSC(1981) Manpower Review
[2] TUC(1981) Industrial Training Consultative Document

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anything more than the critical state of Bonn's finances. Chancellor Schmidt's Social Democrat/Liberal coalition cabinet remains firmly committed to carrying out the NATO plan to station over 500 Pershing II and Cruise nuclear missiles in Western Europe — 108 Pershings and 92 Cruise in the Federal Republic alone.

But both within and beyond the two coalition parties the resistance to the NATO decision has been growing dramatically this year. Even at the recent congress of the bourgeois-liberal Free Democratic Party, 40% of the delegates voted against the stationing of the new missiles on German soil despite the resignation threat of their leader, Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher. Nor can there be any doubt that in the dominant government party, the SPD, a clear majority of members and functionaries are opposed to the government line. Two-thirds of the SPD's district organisations have already adopted resolutions to this effect. The national conventions of the Young Socialists and the social-democratic Women's League have voted against the missiles, and a number of SPD members of parliament and prominent party leaders such as Erhard Eppler have voiced public opposition. The expulsion of left-wing MP Karl-Heinz Hansen for denouncing Schmidt's policy as 'secret diplomacy behind the people's back' will hardly silence this growing dissent. On the contrary, it now looks as though it has found another influential voice in party chairman and ex-Chancellor Willy Brandt, who returned from his controversial visit to Moscow in late June to publicly advocate negotiations in order to prevent implementation of the NATO decision just when, in an interview with the magazine *Der Spiegel*, Reagan's leading disarmament adviser Eugene Rostow confirmed Washington's insistence that the stationing of Pershing and Cruise in Europe was 'non-negotiable'.

It is thus quite possible — although, given the past record of climb-downs in the face of skilled manipulation and resignation blackmail, by no means certain — that the SPD's congress next spring will formally renounce the NATO decision. But however important a victory that would be, it might only trigger a government crisis and lead to a return to power of a Christian-Democratic opposition party full of enthusiasm for 'redressing the nuclear balance in Europe'. The only means of preventing that is the building of a broad mass movement that reaches beyond the ranks of the SPD activists and mobilises the majority of the West German population against the missiles.

There are signs that such a movement is already in the making. The Krefeld Appeal against Pershing and Cruise has already been signed — despite a massive 'Communist plot' campaign against it — by nearly a million West Germans; in the trade unions an anti-missile campaign is gaining strength; and extra-parliamentary forces such as the ecologist Green Party, the multitude of 'citizens' initiative' groups against nuclear power stations, and the student and women's movements are all rallying support for both the Krefeld Appeal and the European Nuclear Disarmament campaign initiated by E P Thompson and the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. But perhaps the most telling indication of the actual and potential strength of the peace movement was given by the Protestant *Kirchentag* (convention) in June this year in Hamburg. Schmidt was booed by a large section of a carefully-filtered audience, Defence Minister Apel needed police riot shields around the rostrum to protect him from missiles hurled from the floor, and, most importantly, 100,000 people, mainly young and predominantly Christian, participated in the largest anti-war demonstration West Germany had seen since the 1950s.

For the *Bundesrepublick*, the Western part of a divided country, the missiles debate raises some very fundamental issues. Nowhere else in Western Europe is anti-communism as well-entrenched, nowhere else the political, economic and military alignment with the USA as close. Ever since the SPD abandoned its opposition to Western integration, re-armament, and, indeed, capitalism, in the the late 1950s, Bonn's role as Washington's faithful junior partner in Europe has remained virtually unchallenged. It was Schmidt, in fact, who first 'discovered' the European 'nuclear imbalance' in 1977.

Yet it is West Germany which is most acutely threatened by a possible European theatre nuclear confrontation. As the easternmost and largest base of the US missiles, it faces immediate annihilation in the event of war. Nowhere else were popular hopes of lasting detente as high, and nowhere else is the collapse of detente felt as deadly a threat to their physical survival by so many people. Fear can be a potent political factor, however, and the resurgence of a mass anti-war movement fuelled by the fear of a European nuclear holocaust may well challenge not just the missiles decision, but the entire pro-NATO consensus as such.

The huge anti-missiles demonstration planned for 10th October in Bonn by an unprecedentedly broad coalition of forces should dwarf any previous mobilisation by the peace movement in Germany in recent years. But it could be more than that and may well signal the beginning of a new departure in West German politics.

THE PLO

Over a period of the past decade or so, the Palestinians have faced several of what seemed to be 'battles of survival', at least as far as the resistance movement of the Palestine Liberation Organisation was concerned, but have emerged from each battering significantly stronger. Certainly this is true of the July confrontation, in which Israel bombed residential areas of Beirut, killing some 300 civilians. As the Palestinians retaliated with heavy shelling of Israeli settlements, Begin's strategy of crushing the Palestinian forces clearly failed in its objectives.

The implications of the conflict on the Israelis have yet to be assessed. However, within Israel there is concern at high levels that the settlers based along the northern borders with Lebanon were deeply shocked by the intensity of Palestinian shelling: in contrast to the traditional image of the Israeli standing firm, the reality was that almost all the settlers fled from the region, according to Israeli newspaper reports.

The ceasefire negotiated by US envoy Philip Habib, with the assistance of the United Nations, has been widely seen as the first de facto agreement between Israel and the PLO. Prime Minister Begin resolutely refutes this, but what he cannot deny is that the fighting was between Israeli and Palestinian forces.

The July confrontation, in fact, did much to heighten Palestinian morale. In military terms Begin failed to halt Palestinian operations, or even the resupply of guerrilla bases in southern Lebanon. On the political level, the Palestinians have reaped the harvest of the international outcry at Israel's bombing of civilian areas of Beirut.

Arafat's hand has been clearly strengthened. Internally within the PLO, his critics had already been swept aside by his diplomatic initiative in Europe and within the United Nations. However, there are now signs that the Palestinians' devotion to seeking an international, and essentially European, initiative to resolve the Palestine question, may be drawing to a close. The PLO leadership is frustrated by the failure of the EEC to formulate a major diplomatic initiative. Hopes for this have been partly upset by the election of Mitterrand in France; his sympathies with Israel contrast with the more critical stance being adopted in other EEC states. Now a new EEC consensus must be created.

But if the EEC initiative has stalled, it is largely the result of Europe's inability to act

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independently of the United States. The election of Ronald Reagan has set back Palestinian hopes. A re-elected Carter administration, with four years of experience in dealing with Israel and the Arabs, and no need to be concerned with re-election, was expected to come to terms with the PLO as a central party to the Middle East conflict. Reagan, on the other hand, lacks experience of the Middle East, coupled with his strong commitment to Israel.

the Gulf states, have no practical commitment to military confrontation with Israel.

Equally frustrating for Arafat, is the Arab refusal to use its oil and financial power to pressure the United States. Even in the wake of the Israeli attack on Baghdad, and the bombing of Beirut, the summit of Arab foreign ministers in Tunis resulted in little more than a reiteration of earlier platitudes.

Against this background, Arafat has little room for manoeuvre. Yet he views his limited

how to mobilise the union membership in active struggle for the implementation of Left policies.

The policy decisions at Blackpool will help this: to sharpen the fight against the Tory onslaught on living standards, social services and democratic rights; to press demands on the next Labour government to ensure it does not go down the way of its predecessors. Yet it will be to the extent to which a union movement, fighting for progressive policies is

In the short term, the PLO may have to resort to the military option. There are signs that the resistance movement within the territories under Israeli military occupation is beginning to regroup and re-arm. Recently Palestinian commandos assassinated the military governor of occupied Gaza, and then following the Lebanon ceasefire, Palestinian fighters attacked a bus carrying Israeli settlers in the 1967 occupied territories.

The problem with military confrontation is the stand of the Arab regimes. The weaponry supplied to the PLO in Lebanon by Libya turned the Palestinians into a formidable force in the recent fighting, but it is difficult to find another single Arab government with that kind of commitment to the Palestinian struggle. Egypt has its peace treaty with Israel; Jordan does not favour military confrontation; Syria, faced with the overall Arab rejection of confrontation, realises the costs would be very high if Damascus attempted to liberate her Golan Heights territory by military means without supportive action by Jordan and Egypt on Israel's other borders. Other Arab regimes, notably the Saudis and

options from a position of strength within the Palestinian resistance movement. As well as being Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee, and in control of the Palestinian armed forces, he also heads Al Fatah, the largest resistance group which dwarfs all others. Smaller groups like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the even smaller Democratic Front, eventually have to fall back on Fatah protection in the event of Israeli or even Arab attacks on the Palestinians. Their only scope for dissent is to withdraw from the PLO, and past actions of this kind have not given them any increased status to challenge the Arafat leadership.

In the immediate term, the PLO can be expected to seek to consolidate its support in the West, in readiness to launch a new initiative at the United Nations in the autumn when the issue of sanctions against Israel will almost certainly be placed on the agenda.

THE TUC

The key question facing the trade union movement, following the debates and discussions of the annual TUC this September, is

developed now that will also decide whether a Labour government, committed to the policies of the movement, is returned. Such a movement can also force concessions from the Tories and bring them to a speedier General Election.

The TUC this year is expected to take great steps forward in two major policy areas. It will call for withdrawal from the Common Market, with no 'ifs' and 'buts' or proceedural delays. This will place it in a politically more advanced position than the trade union movement of any other major member of the Common Market.

The TUC could also commit itself to campaign for Britain to take unilateral action for nuclear disarmament. Such a decision would also place the British trade union movement in the forefront of the fight for detente and disarmament.

Both these decisions are demonstrative of the advanced political position of the British trade union movement, and follow significant gains for left policies made within individual trade unions over recent years. The Communist Party, alone among parties in

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Britain, has consistently campaigned for withdrawl from the Market and for unilateral disarmament and has played an important part in securing advances for these positions.

Four related questions debated at this year's TUC deserve particular mention. One is the importance of further broad-based demonstrative actions through which the organisations of the working class can draw into activity not only their own membership but many others (such as the churches, organisations of black people, women and youth). Here the Peoples March for Jobs serves as an example of what can be done. Another is making the TUC's growing number of centres for the unemployed into campaigning foci which will provide organisation and cohesion for the unemployed themselves, alongside the trade union movement. The third, and very difficult question at a time of economic slump, is how to drive home the lesson taught by the miners, that only united and determined action can stop sackings. The fourth related question is that of winning clarity on policy, and specifically on the inter-relationship of the demands of the alternative economic policy and struggle for them.

Here we come up against the most entrenched of right wing ideas — 'planning' (low) incomes for workers. The crucial ideological debate at Congress was once again around this. The right wing will still argue that low wages can save jobs. Its view that wages must be 'planned' downwards is in line with that of the employers and their Tory government. The Communists and others on the Left will fight to win understanding that without mobilisation of the mass of workers in defence of living standards nothing else will be won. Without greater purchasing power the other elements of the alternative economic strategy will become as unrealisable as did the control of rising prices under the Heath government (or the present one, for that matter) and the promised goodies under the 'social contract'.

No issue meets with greater resistance from the capitalist class than the demand for higher wages. This is only natural, as it is what the class struggle is grounded on. Incomes policies are designed to maintain the status quo, whatever the right wing in the trade union movement might hope for.

The TUC General Council went to Congress this year with some important achievements under its belt. These include the work put in to produce the Charter for Black Workers' Rights in employment and the unions, with which Ken Gill, as Chairman of the TUC's Equal Rights Committee, is very much associated. There is also the programme for the development of the inner cities; the discussions on the level of services provided by the TUC to its affiliate-unions and to the unemployed; the multitude of campaigning material issued within the Campaign for Economic and Social Advance. All point to the greater political depth of the trade union movement. Moreover, following last year's successful May 14 Day of Action, this year's April week of Activities and the Peoples March for Jobs have led to the TUC and its regional machinery 'coming of age'. These point to the development of a more effective campaigning role for the TUC.

As the battle sharpens between right and left in the labour movement as a whole, the communists are making a greater contribution to winning understanding of the nature of the present crisis and of the role of the working class in defeating the present right offensive, alongside the fight for longer term change. This role is being increasingly recognised, not only during the Peoples March for Jobs but on a continuing basis, as the trade unions play a growing positive role in the battle for greater democracy within the Labour Party itself.

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Keith Dixon and
Daniel Perraud

France Moves Left

The rightward drift in Western politics has been brought to a dramatic halt in France. The French Left now stands on the verge of radical advance which can surpass the two previous highwater marks, 1936 and 1945.

The electoral defeat of Giscard d'Estaing and his right wing coalition, and the constitution of a government in which all the parties of the French Left are represented, under the presidency of the Socialist François Mitterrand, have radically changed the political situation both in France and in Europe. After a period of growing conservatism in European politics, the Left victory in France is a major trend reversal. The despondent French labour movement of the late seventies has been, somewhat unexpectedly, thrust into a new situation in which the possibilities of radical advance are perhaps even greater than during the two historical precedents of the Popular Front and the Liberation. In neighbouring European countries, in particular in Italy, the French victory could well have major political repercussions — as the Reagan administration rightly fears.

Few political observers, however, on the French Left have been willing to approach the more contradictory aspects of the new situation. The fact that the balance of forces on the Left has been altered in favour of the Socialists leading some commentators to evoke, perhaps prematurely, the historical decline of the Communist Party, has not yet been seriously analysed. Similarly, a new regrouping of the Right, under the leadership of the authoritarian Gaullist leader, Jacques Chirac, after the heavy losses suffered by the parties most closely associated with the former president, needs more detailed examination.

Understanding these new aspects of the political situation will involve taking a critical look at the Socialist Party and what it represents, and at the apparent failure of Communist strategy over the last fifteen years, as well as situating the decline and divisions of the Right in their historical context.

A brief analysis of the economic and political situation immediately prior to Giscard's downfall should help to illustrate to what extent present reactions, in particular in the labour movement, are very much determined by years of political frustration and bottled-up, powerless anger.

THE RIGHT: AN IMMOVABLE OBJECT?

The strong-arm comeback of De Gaulle in 1958 marked a turning point in French postwar politics. Dissatisfaction with the instability and mediocrity of the 4th Republic was at its zenith as successive governments blundered from one costly colonial war (Indochina) to another (Algeria) and seemed incapable of acting resolutely either on the home or foreign scene. Undoubtedly for many French people, De Gaulle and the authoritarian, anti-democratic constitution which he imposed on the 5th Republic, represented stability at home, and prestige abroad. For the French ruling class, he was a welcome, if unruly, replacement for previous incompetence and political uncertainty. Long after De Gaulle was forced to leave the political scene in 1969, his ghost continued to haunt French politics. Up until the present time his name has been used by right wing leaders (Gaullist and non-Gaullist) in order to conjure up popular support and an increasingly elusive political stability.

23 years after the Gaullist take-over, the scars of unbroken right wing domination were there for all to see. Even though May 1968 showed the tremendous potential of popular protest and opened the first significant cracks in the monolithic Gaullist edifice (De Gaulle resigned from office only a year later, after having been opposed by part of the Right notably Giscard d'Estaing) its effects were nonetheless sadly short-lived, even in the universities, where the revolt began.

Doubtless, after the apparent failure of the 'May events' to shake

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right wing domination, and, ten years later, because of the failure of the Common Programme experience, many had come to believe that the victory of the Left was impossible in the near future. The election of Valery Giscard d'Estaing as president of the Republic in 1974, in a period when Left unity was at its strongest, the deepening economic crisis and the increasingly reactionary measures taken by successive governments all accelerated a process of political demoralisation in certain strata of the population. Of course, this tendency was exacerbated by the last three years of division within the labour movement, and the back-biting and mutual recriminations which went along with it.

Industrial front

On the industrial front, the initial successes of the united trade union action in the early seventies gave way to increasingly numerous defeats as dissension spread between the two major trade union confederations, the CGT[1] and the CFDT[2], and as the political leadership of the bourgeoisie decided to restructure French industry under the pressure of the economic crisis. Factory closures, mass redundancies, attacks on trade union rights, police intervention in industrial disputes, extreme right wing violence against trade union and Left militants, all rained down on an increasingly divided labour movement. Industrial battles, which were also 'test cases' for both the employers and the unions (Lip, Manufrance, the steel plants of the north . . .), were either lost, or dragged on unendingly.

> In neighbouring European countries, in particular in Italy, the French victory could well have major political repercussions

The CFDT, the second strongest confederation, under the leadership of Edmond Maire, member of the Socialist Party and long considered as a 'left' critic of the socialist-communist alliance, moved very much on to the defensive during this period. (It should be kept in mind that the CFDT had taken an ultra-left stand during the 'May events' some years earlier.) A new strategy of compromise and 'reasonable' trade union demands was elaborated in order to cope with the changing social and economic situation. This reorientation of union activity along more moderate lines met with the powerless hostility of the militant minority within the CFDT and was severely criticised by the CGT. By the late seventies both unions were losing members, and participation in union affairs was falling.

These setbacks for the trade union movement were particularly severe in those sectors in which the unions were either weak, badly organised or unwilling to engage in head-on collisions with the government. This was the case, for example, in the universities where, since 1968, the student unions were hopelessly divided and highly unrepresentative, and the teachers' unions were unable to muster up any sort of prolonged militant action. Thus, Giscard's new and arrogant minister in charge of university affairs — Mme Saunier-Seite — undertook successfully the dismantling of the relatively democratic university structures ('infested with communists' according to Saunier-Seite) which had been set up in 1968, and reorganised French higher education in line with the overall restructuring of industry implemented by Giscard and Barre (the prime minister and formerly distinguished university economist). By means of a series of decrees and laws, which the unions fought without any great measure of success, the pre-1968 university hierarchy was re-established, student entrance became more selective, scientific research was re-oriented into more 'profitable' channels, and certain 'non-profitable' disciplines were simply scrapped.

It would be inaccurate to say that Giscard's plans for restructuring industry in the interests of the more dynamic transnational 'fraction' of French capital met with no resistance. Undoubtedly the struggles which took place as the crisis deepened, and therefore as the ideological conditions of struggle became more difficult, prevented the French government from imposing even greater sacrifices on the working class. Nevertheless, repeated defeats and failures and growing internecine divisions on the Left pushed many workers towards political pessimism.

However, it is important to point out that this general atmosphere of morosity, and the sometimes fatalistic feeling that the Right was somehow unbeatable was based on an illusion: that of the solidity of right wing power. In fact, a political analysis of electoral trends since the mid-sixties shows the growing fragility of right wing domination in France. The fact that the French bourgeoisie was obliged to group all its forces (from the Lecanuet centre-right to the extreme Right ex-OAS[3] and neo-fascists) behind Giscard d'Estaing in 1974 showed quite clearly that its margin of manoeuvre had been reduced to a dangerous minimum.

THE UNDERLYING DECLINE

Much has been made, during and since the elections, of the divisions on the French Right between the two major factions in the rightwing coalition: the Gaullists and the Giscardians. Some Giscardian leaders have even suggested that the Right was beaten because it was divided, and have gone on to lay the responsibility for the defeat on the Gaullist leader, Jacques Chirac, who in 1976 gave up his post as Prime Minister and entered into a phase of 'semi opposition'.

Although the French Right has always been ideologically heterogeneous, its internal divisions are more or less pronounced according to the historical context. Thus under De Gaulle from 1958 until the late sixties the 'national' Right went uncontested. Undoubtedly, the economic recession and the first signs of a weakening of the Gaullist grip on French society intensified the conflict between the 'national' Right and the 'liberal' (transnational) Right under the leadership of Giscard and more closely associated with the outward looking interests of major French industrial groups.

There are however two possible interpretations of this conflict:

(a) Chirac and Giscard d'Estaing are the political representatives of two fractions of French capital whose interests become increasingly contradictory as the crisis deepens. According to this hypothesis, Giscard represents the dynamic transnational fraction of French capital, and the policies implemented by the various governments during his presidency were intended to consolidate the power of this fraction, to reduce to a minimum working class resistance to the restructuring of the French economy necessary for its successful insertion in the international environment, and to facilitate the operations of this fraction in certain key geographical areas (thus the undeclared aim of Giscard's African policy was to provide the best possible conditions for French capital penetration in Africa).[4]

(b) Chirac and Giscard d'Estaing are both representatives of the French bourgeoisie, which although divided on certain secondary matters, is united in its concern to maintain power *as a class*. Thus the ideological divisions between Chirac and Giscard *in the final instance* are to be used when necessary to provide an alternative Right government in face of the threat of an eventual Left victory and taking into account the discontent generated by unpopular policies. Thus the break-up between Chirac and Giscard in 1976, according to this point of view, was 'organised' in preparation for the eventual defeat of Giscard: Chirac, in opposing Giscard from 1976 onwards, could become a credible successor.[5]

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Without opting for either of these hypotheses, some tentative conclusions may nonetheless be drawn. Historically, the French ruling class has always played successfully on the 'divisions' on the Right: to such an extent that right wing factions have been able to alternate in office since the beginning of the century, and have managed to keep the Left, in particular the Communist Party, at a safe distance (with the exception of the historical 'accidents' of 1936 and 1945). Thus in the recent period of growing political instability, Giscard and his group 'broke away' from the dominant Gaullist faction in 1969 with a political take-over in view (this took place in 1974); so also, in a changed political context in which the liberal Right had the upper hand, Chirac 'broke away' from Giscard in 1976, hoping to gain political benefit from Giscard's growing unpopularity. It may therefore be reasonably argued that the divisions on the Right, despite their short term disadvantages and whether they are 'organised' or not, are also a means of long term political survival.

Two different traditions

Nonetheless Chirac and Giscard do represent two distinct strategies which take their roots in the distinct traditions of the 'national' and 'liberal' Right.

The 'national' Right has always had a more 'political' vision than that of the economistic 'liberal' Right. In power from 1958 until 1974, De Gaulle and his successors always kept in mind the political necessity of consolidating their social base, of maintaining their 'support strata', sometimes at the expense of immediate economic interests. This explains their intransigent, nationalistic attitudes towards the EEC, and their defence of the agricultural sector and small industries.

On the other hand, the liberal Right, from 1974 onwards, tended to disdain such considerations (admittedly under the pressure of the economic crisis), and pushed through a series of ruthless policies based on capital accumulation and the *selective* defence of profit rates. This, of course, meant sacrificing whole branches of French industry — and necessarily alienating ever-growing sections of the population.

Although the economic coherence of the strategy implemented by Giscard and his Prime Minister, Raymond Barre, was impeccable from a capitalist point of view (it helped to put French capital back on the map in a period of world recession) nevertheless it lacked political vision. In particular it lacked a persuasive rightist ideology capable of offsetting the effects of the drastic policies being imposed on the population (redundancies, growing inflation, a decrease in real agricultural income over the period of Giscardian rule).

In order to win (narrowly) the elections in 1974, Giscard had been obliged to group together *all* the forces of the Right. Thus it was of key importance to win over politically the centre-left, only very loosely attached to Left unity. But Giscard had neither the local roots nor the populistic appeal of the Gaullists and his modernist, pseudo-liberal approach made no headway on his Left (the one notable exception was the former Left Radical leader, Robert Fabre, who had signed the Common Programme in 1972, participated in the renegotiation of the programme in 1977, and who defected to the Right in 1978). Not only this, but certain 'liberal' measures (the law on abortion, the lowering of the voting age to 18) probably helped to alienate some of the more traditionalist supporters of the Right.

To sum up, it may be said that the predominantly Giscardian Right lost *politically* the wager that it was in the process of winning in the economic sphere. Its political initiatives were insufficient to win new support or to win back those strata of the population which had been hit by the crisis and the redeployment and austerity policies of the Barre government. The political alternative offered, from 1976 onwards, by the RPR[6] under the leadership of Chirac was not convincing enough to maintain the balance in favour of the bourgeoisie. The political necessities of the seventies, during which full scale opposition was a luxury which the Gaullists could not afford (this would immediately have caused a political crisis), had forced the RPR into giving constant parliamentary support to measures which they verbally criticised. Chirac's claim to be an opposition candidate to Giscard in the Presidential elections in May was undermined by the activity of his party throughout the Giscard period (this included minority Gaullist participation in government up until the 1981 elections). Thus, despite the apparent self confidence of Giscard and his collaborators, and the growing despondency of the labour movement, the stage was being set for the Left.

LEFT UNITY AND SOCIALIST AMBITIONS

In order to understand the political significance of the Left alliance and the successes of the Socialist Party, it is necessary to trace briefly the historical development of the process of Left unity.

By the mid-sixties the French Socialist Party, the SFIO[7], under the leadership of Guy Mollet, had fallen into a state of evident decline, and was in need of a major facelift if it was to regain influence on the Left. Throughout the cold war it had drifted rightwards, and had come to epitomise cold war attitudes in French politics. It had been consistently and virulently anti-communist since the expulsion of the Communists from the Ranadier government in 1947. It had supported and sometimes directed the colonial adventures of the 4th Republic. In 1958, Guy Mollet backed the Gaullist takeover and accepted participation in the first government of the 5th Republic. In the first ten years of institutionalised Gaullism, the Socialists often adopted a more right wing stand on foreign affairs (Vietnam, the Atlantic alliance) than De Gaulle himself. In home affairs, they had no coherent political or economic project. The unprincipled compromises and political ineptitude of the SFIO leadership had led to a decline of Socialist influence, and a splintering of the Socialist movement. Small dissident groups, unhappy with the policies of the SFIO, began to flourish throughout the sixties.

> The Communist Party proved incapable of extending its influence beyond its traditional working class base

From 1965 onwards, the situation on the Left began to evolve more and more rapidly. De Gaulle's influence over the non-communist Left was on the decline as the initial popular enthusiasm for Gaullist policies began to wane. The Communist Party, which was just emerging from a long period of isolation and sectarianism, had made Left unity around a programme of government the centre-pin of its political activity. The Socialist leadership, acutely aware of its loss of influence and credibility, became more inclined to seek allies on its Left.

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[1] Confederation Générale du Travail. Strongest trade union confederation. The General Secretary of the CGT, Georges Séguy, is also a member of the Political Bureau of the French Communist Party (PCF).

[2] Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail. Took an increasingly moderate stand over the last three years of right wing rule.

[3] Organisation Armée Secrète. Ultra colonialist paramilitary group which engaged in terrorist activities at the end of the Algerian war.

[4] See *Giscard: Le Destin de la Crise*, CRREC, OUG, 1981.

[5] This is the analysis of the PCF.

[6] Rassemblement Pour la République. Major Gaullist party. Junior partner in right wing coalition since 1974 with the Giscardian *Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF)*.

[7] Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière.

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One of the key factors since the electoral defeat of the Right has been the announcement of Communist participation in the government

The renovation

This process of renovation was largely instigated outside the political leadership of the SFIO. François Mitterrand, leader of a small left splinter group, the *Convention des Institutions Républicaines* was to play a key rôle. Mitterrand and his associates had two main objectives in view:

(a) To discard the cumbersome heritage of the SFIO which had lost all credit on the Left.

(b) To build a new party, pragmatically recognising the need for Left unity and capable of creating a new balance of forces on the Left in which the Socialists would be dominant.

This 'new' party finally emerged at the Epinay Congress in 1971. It had radically broken with the centrist traditions of the SFIO, come out clearly for a socialist alternative, and committed itself to Left unity. Its grandiose ambitions at that time seemed no more than pipe dreams. Thus the Communist Party, which was to hail the signing of the Common Programme as a major victory, only a year later, clearly believed, on the basis of the 1969 Deferre débacle, that the Socialist Party was doomed to remain a permanent junior partner in the Left alliance.

May 1968

It soon became clear however, that the 'historical' defeat of the Socialists in 1969 was no more than the electoral repudiation of the traditional political expression of French social democracy, the SFIO, and in no way a sign of the erosion of the reformist current on the French Left. The new middle strata (technicians, middle managers, young farmers, young intellectuals) which had played a key role in the May events, were to provide the social basis for the political lift-off of the renovated Socialist Party.

The French Communist Party had correctly analysed the May revolt as being marked by the first political appearance of these strata. However, this understanding was not followed through in practice. The major battle of the seventies to win over these new actors on the social scene was undoubtedly lost to the Socialist Party. They moved from the romantic ultra leftism of the May events to left reformism, bypassing the Communist Party in the process, and adding their numbers to the traditional social base of the SFIO.

Thus from 1972 to 1977, the dynamics of Left unity were Socialist oriented. While widening its social base, the Socialist Party also maintained its traditional links with two of the major trade union confederations, the teachers' union, the FEN,[8] and the formerly CIA-backed breakaway from the CGT, the CGT-FO.[9] In 1974, the Socialist Party extended its influence in the trade union movement when it organised the *Assises pour le Socialisme*, and thus strengthened its ties with the CFDT.

The Communist Party proved incapable of extending its influence beyond its traditional working class base. Unlike the Italian Communist Party, it did not manage to establish its intellectual hegemony in these new key areas. Undoubtedly the social origins and anti-communist prejudices of the strata involved made them 'naturally' wary of the Communists, but there were other contributing factors: the French Communist Party's distrustful attitude towards intellectuals, its hesitations and self-censorship in the analysis of the socialist countries, and its very late and awkward conversion to Eurocommunism made the left social-democrat alternative so much more attractive to these strata.

The political eclecticism of the Socialist Party (organised into official tendencies) was its major advantage in the early years of Left unity. Whereas the anti-sovietism and pro-atlanticist positions of certain Socialist leaders, including Mitterrand, reassured the traditional SFIO voters and drew in support from the Right, on the other end of the spectrum, the ultra left rhetoric of the CERES[10] and the Socialist Left caught the sympathy of the former *soixante-huitards*.[11] Thus the party was able to recruit on a wide, if not always principled basis.

The changing balance

In the National Assembly elections in 1973, for the first time since the war, the Socialists plus the Left Radicals overtook the Communists in terms of votes. When the united Left presented François Mitterrand as their candidate in the first round of the presidential elections, this no doubt reinforced the idea that Mitterrand was the natural leader of the Left, and that the Socialist Party was more likely to win new electors for the Left alliance.

Thus the balance gradually began to change on the Left, to the detriment of the Communist Party. The latter gained new members and maintained its influence in traditional Communist strongholds (although already in the mid-seventies a shift was taking place in the red suburbs of Paris towards the Socialist Party), but its electoral impact remained static. During the period of the 22nd Congress, the

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party undertook a major revision of its strategy (a new and more critical attitude towards the socialist countries, abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, acceptance of the idea of political pluralism under socialism etc), but it was unable to grow with the Left. This was nonetheless a period of new freedom of action for Communist reviews such as *La Nouvelle Critique*, and *France Nouvelle*, and real attempts were made to improve and renovate Communist intervention in intellectual spheres. It was also at this time, that the party's organisational capacities in industry were reinforced. However, all this was insufficient to turn the tide of the Socialist Party advance.

By 1975, the Socialist Party had already sufficiently consolidated its political base to detach itself from the Communists and to begin to look rightwards for increasing support. This process culminated in the break in Left unity. Over the key issues of nationalisation, workers' control in industry and the level of the minimum wage, the Socialist Party dug its feet in and refused to be moved by the 'maximalist' demands[12] of the Communist Party.

This 'new' attitude of the Socialist Party may well also have been influenced by the arrival to the party leadership of Michel Rocard, former leader of the small radical PSU who became one of the most virulent and persuasive opponents of the programmatic alliance between the Communists and the Socialists. His technocratic views certainly played an important role in determining the positions defended by the Socialists during the negotiations in September 1977.

The break in Left unity in September 1977, and the narrow victory of the Right in the ensuing National Assembly elections in 1978, led to radical changes on the French political scene. The fact that the Socialists were no longer associated in a programmatic alliance with the Communists enabled them to gain ground on their right. However, the reorientation of Communist activity during this period also allowed the Socialists (as the recent elections amply demonstrate) to maintain and build on their Left support.

Realising that the Socialist Party had become (numerically) the dominant party of the Left, and would soon (politically) dominate the Left alliance, the Communist Party moved onto a quite different political register. The denunciation of Socialist 'misdeeds' became a central element of party activity; attitudes towards the Soviet Union and other socialist countries became less critical; party discipline was tightened and, for the first time in many years, dissident party members were expelled; party campaigns became tougher and more controversial. This was all quite coherent politically, and evidently aimed at consolidating the party's strength in the working class, clarifying the distinction between the reformist and revolutionary currents within the Left, and recreating (in the far distant future) the conditions for a stronger Left coalition by combatting the illusions about the Socialist Party generated by the period of Left unity.

As the recent elections have shown, the consequences of these new attitudes were quite catastrophic. The Communist Party was variously accused of sectarianism, blind pro-sovietism (after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan) and even of racialism (after the incidents which opposed Communists and immigrants in the Communist-run district of Vitry). Most significantly, many Communist supporters either did not understand or simply did not accept the drastic reorientation of party attitudes. The Socialist Party appeared as the victim of Communist aggressiveness, which in turn led many Communist voters to transfer their support to Mitterrand and the Socialists in the recent elections. Although there were conjunctural factors which determined the Communist losses in May-June (among which was the 'useful vote' for François Mitterrand in the first round of the presidential elections in order to avoid a Chirac-Giscard contest in the second round), the fact remains that after three years of intense political activity intended to turn the tide on the Left, the Communist Party obtained in the National Assembly elections its lowest score since 1936.

THE ELECTIONS AND AFTER

The two national elections in May and June have radically transformed the French political landscape. The dominant historical trends, as described above, have accelerated quite unexpectedly. The long term political objectives of the Socialist Party leadership, as announced in the late sixties and early seventies,[13] have been fulfilled: thus, the Socialist Party has become by far the most influential party of the Left (in terms of parliamentary seats, this influence has been amplified by an unfair and undemocratic electoral system) and the Communist Party, from a state of virtual stagnation, has gone on to suffer two major electoral defeats. On the Right, the balance of forces has swung back in favour of the national Right (the RPR) after the severe political defeat of the Giscardian forces. Chirac will no doubt benefit from the sudden disappearance of Giscard from public affairs, as the rest of the liberal Right is obliged to rally around relatively minor political figures (Lecanuet, Poniatowski etc).

One of the key factors since the electoral defeat of the Right has been the announcement of Communist participation in the second Mauroy government. Although 'expected', after the signing of a political agreement between the Socialist and Communist Parties, this historic decision will doubtless have immediate and long lasting effects both in France and abroad. On the home front, the fact that the Communists have been officially recognised as part of the new 'presidential majority' and have been given important ministerial posts (transport, civil service, health and adult education) will help to strengthen the confidence of the working class in the new government, and thus improve the chances of its success. In Europe, it will have direct repercussions in those countries where the Communist Party is highly representative: Italy, Greece, Portugal, Spain. In particular in Italy, the US veto against Communist participation in government has obviously taken a bad knock after this French precedent.

The dangers

Of course, the participation of the French Communist Party in a predominantly Socialist government is not without ambiguities and contradictions. There is obviously a direct relation between the weakening of Communist influence and the acceptance of Communist ministers. To what extent these four ministers will be 'hostages' of a reformist consensus within the government remains to be seen. Only a few months ago, the Communist leadership was itself pointing out the dangers of an eventual Socialist victory in France: social

[8] Fédération de l'Education Nationale.

[9] Confédération Générale du Travail — Force Ouvrière.

[10] Centre d'Etudes, de Recherche et d'Education Socialistes.

[11] Term referring to those who participated in, or sympathised with the May 1968 revolt.

[12] Among these demands was the nationalisation of the Peugeot-Citroën group which had been proposed in parliament two years earlier by the Socialist group, and which was opposed by the Socialist negotiators in the September 1977 discussions.

[13] See below Mitterrand's statement at the Socialist Party Congress in Bagnolet in 1973:

> 'Left unity cannot do without the Communists. However, Left unity is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for changing the political majority and therefore national political orientations. Socialist democracy, if it is to be capable of exercising leadership within the new majority, must extend its support on the Left (by means of a rigorous economic programme) and on the Right (by means of political liberalism). This is why I believe it necessary to build a political movement capable firstly of facing up to the Communist Party and later of dominating it . . .'

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democratisation of the French working class, inability of the Socialist Party to develop a coherent economic policy capable of breaking the resistance of the monopolies, danger of disappointing the expectations of the working class and therefore preparing the way for an authoritarian Right comeback. All these dangers, although not necessarily in the caricatural form in which they were sometimes presented, continue to exist. It is difficult to say whether Communist participation and the mobilisation within the labour movement which this will probably involve will be sufficient to avoid the pitfalls.

For pitfalls there certainly will be. As the Minister of Research and Technology, Mr J P Chevenement (leader of the CERES) recently explained in a television interview: 'The Left has won political power, but it is far from having economic power'. The French bourgeoisie has already embarked on a vigorous defence of its economic interests in a now unfavourable environment (speculation on the stock exchange in Paris, deliberate politically oriented price rises, 'nationalisable' firms cancelling their orders and thus panicking sub-contractors and their employees etc). The Right although evidently badly shaken by its electoral thrashing and the subsequent internal quarrels will not be long in reorganising, most probably behind the strong arm Gaullist leader, Jacques Chirac. The eventuality of extreme right destabilising activities cannot be ignored, although the present increasing mass support for the government and a relatively 'calm' international situation make this unlikely for the time being.

The Left government has several major assets which it will have to build on in the months to come. The desire for change is deep rooted in major sections of the population, and is showing no visible signs of waning.[14] In the last seven years of Giscardian rule, the Communist Party largely contributed to giving a radical political content to the growing dissatisfaction with right wing policies. The Communist Party could thus play a key role in mobilising the desire for change, and raising militant support for the progressive social and economic measures proposed by the government. Undoubtedly, without the participation of the Communists, the Socialist government would have had great difficulty in winning this support; despite its growing social base and its relations with several major trade union confederations, it remains very much, in terms of militant strength and party cadres, a 'middle strata party': (in the recently elected Socialist parliamentary group, 138 of the 270 deputies are teachers, and only 2 are industrial workers).

The Right had promised chaos if ever Mitterrand was elected, but it has been proven wrong. Whereas in 1936 the victory of the Popular Front (which the Communists supported, although refusing to participate in the government) was almost immediately followed by a wave of strikes and factory occupations in order to impose working class demands, the 'constructive' attitude adopted by all the major unions since Mitterrand's election has both given the government breathing space and deprived the Right of a major propaganda argument. Similarly, the sharp decline in Communist electoral influence has weakened the traditional right wing criticism of the Left in general, and Left governments in particular, ie, the danger of Communist domination. Lastly, the fact that the Right can no longer manipulate for its own ends (or at least, not to the same extent as before), the state apparatus, which includes the radio and television, is obviously another source of difficulty.

A left orientation

Mitterrand and the two Mauroy governments, in proceeding cautiously, avoiding unnecessary tensions (no witchhunts in the army, police, state controlled media etc) have consolidated support from the hesitant centre-left and disarmed right wing critics. Nonetheless, the first series of social and economic measures taken by the government seem to confirm a resolutely left orientation. The raising of the minimum wage, of family allowances and old age pensions, the tax increases on the upper income brackets, the proposed wealth tax, the job creation in the public services, and the proposed shortening of the working week (to 39 hours) have all been welcomed by the trade union movement (although the CGT has considered certain of these measures to be insufficient: it would have preferred a greater increase of the minimum wage, and a more resolute move towards the 35 hour week). Similarly, the suspension of all expulsion measures against immigrant workers and the scrapping of the sinister State Security Court which had been largely used, under Giscard, against Basque and Corsican nationalists have shown that, contrary to certain political forecasts, Mitterrand intends to keep his electoral promises. The announcement that the first wave of nationalisations will be discussed and voted in the autumn session of the National Assembly came as a surprise to those who believed that Mitterrand and Mauroy would avoid this delicate problem during their first year in office, and follow the moderate advice of the right wing Socialist Minister of Economy and Finance, Jacques Delors.

in a television broadcast Mitterrand accused Giscard of being too soft on the Soviet Union

Radical changes may also be expected in foreign affairs (although Jobert and Cheysson, respectively Minister of Foreign Trade and Minister of Foreign Relations are both very much on the right of the present government). Under Giscard, France played a key rôle in imperialist strategy in Africa: supporting the most reactionary regimes, intervening militarily to defend French interests, providing military advice and arms against liberation movements. Claude Cheysson's statement against apartheid and those who support it, in the first days of the Mauroy government, took on a symbolic significance in this respect. The priority given to co-operation and dialogue with the Third World constitutes a radical break with previous French governmental attitudes. It should nonetheless be mentioned that Mitterrand's virulent anti-sovietism (in a television broadcast, shortly before the second round of the presidential elections, he accused Giscard of being too soft on the Soviet Union), and his ambiguous, pro-Camp David attitude to Middle East problems may well have negative effects on French foreign policy.

The first months of the new government have been marked by moderation and tact, but also a real determination to tackle the problems of the French economy. The implementation of Mitterrand's social and economic programme will undoubtedly lead to tensions, as big capital sees its power and privileges being whittled away.

Whether these tensions will be overcome, whether the attempt to build socialism democratically 'stage by stage' can succeed, depends on the solidity and political content of Left unity. It also depends on the capacity of the Left to mobilise the labour movement. In this respect, the Communist Party could play a determining part *if* it manages to win back its decisive influence on the Left. This cannot be done without a serious critical appraisal of the recent electoral defeats, and may well involve a major reconsideration of the strategy adopted over the last fifteen years. Whether the leadership of the party is able and willing to open up a wide ranging and unrestricted debate on these vital issues, during the period from now until the 24th Congress in early 1982, both within the party and with the French population, as yet remains to be seen. □

[14] On the contrary, recent opinion polls have shown that popular support for the government has been on the increase since the June elections.

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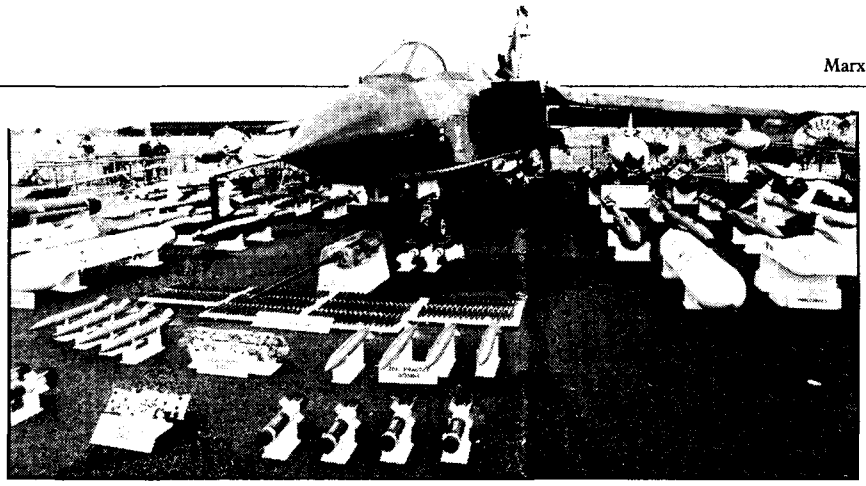

Mark Harrison

Defence: the Tory dilemma

'We cannot go on as we are'. These words from the Government's June 1981 defence review express a painful political dilemma.[1] The Thatcher administration took office in May 1979 with a clear commitment to enhance Britain's military power through force modernisation, increased service pay and a restored pride and purpose for the military. Yet, in the outcome, bursts of largesse have alternated with episodes of petty cheeseparing and ill-concealed Cabinet dissension over the volume and distribution of defence funds. Real defence spending has risen faster and more steadily than at any time since the early sixties, but the response of the service chiefs has been one of outrage at Treasury cutbacks.[2]

At a moment when the disarmament movement has mounted its widest campaigns for twenty years, Conservatism seems incapable of forming its own consensus on military spending. Already two Government ministers have lost position and favour because they fought too strongly against financial limits on the defence budget. The first was former Defence Minister Francis Pym, transferred at the beginning of this year for his half-successful struggle against Treasury cuts for 1981/82. The second was Navy minister Keith Speed, sacked in May for trying to blow the whistle on the Navy cuts announced in June.

Government difficulties in budgeting for defence are symbolised by its commitment to end the run of nearly twenty years in which the volume of real military spending has remained roughly constant or declined, and to increase it by 3% a year until the mid-eighties. The commitment was originally made by Labour at a NATO Ministers' conference in May 1977: 3% growth was supposed to start in 1979. In spite of wholehearted Conservative support, the pledge has not yet been honoured. Cutting public spending and the public sector borrowing requirement have come first. Treasury finances, the 'battle against inflation' and the resulting depressed state of the economy have meant that 3% growth in the defence budget is too much.

But from the point of view of the military establishment, 3% growth is not nearly enough. The service chiefs have secured Government commitments to a variety of major weapons systems and military programmes over the foreseeable future, but it is hard to see how they can all be fitted in underneath the 3% ceiling. The biggest fear of many Conservatives has been that replacement of the Polaris strategic nuclear missile submarine fleet by the Trident system in the 1990s will effectively squeeze out the prospect of needed conventional force modernisation.[3]

The June 1981 White Paper set out the problem in the following terms. Britain's military forces have a structure and scale too ambitious to maintain and renew within the resources which the Government is willing to make available. In order to maintain their 'hitting power and staying power in combat' (in the context of increased military competition with the Warsaw Pact) the forces' structure must be 'one which we can afford to sustain with modern weapons and equipment, and with proper war stocks.' The solution put forward was a shift and cutback in the Navy's posture, reducing the surface fleet from 59 to 50 vessels and emphasising more strongly its submarine, anti-submarine and maritime air roles; along with this would be pursued some minor reductions in service manpower. In this way the Government hopes to make resources available for Britain's other military programmes, consistent with the 3% growth target, without any cutback in overall strategic goals or military effectiveness.

Will these measures resolve the imbalance between military ends and economic means? What prospects do they hold out for potential militarisation and demilitarisation of the economy? In order to answer these questions it is helpful to step back a moment for a broader view.

Britain's military policy

Britain's military policy since the Second World War has been based on two considerations. One is that Britain is and should remain a substantial military power in her own right as an independent nation. The other is that, as a NATO alliance member, Britain has commitments to other NATO states and shares commitments with them. These two considerations give rise to the view that Britain should maintain what is known as a 'balanced' structure of forces right across the spectrum of military power. 'If you want to play golf,' Francis Pym once declared, 'you must have a full bag of clubs.'

What does 'balance' mean in terms of military force? For post-colonial Britain it has four main dimensions.[4] The first is balance between nuclear and conventional weapons: Britain in her own right will wield any category of weapons which may figure substantially in any future conflict of the great powers, and the military will not shrink from deploying weapons of mass destruction alongside conventional

[1] *The UK Defence Programme: The Way Forward*, Cmnd 8288, London: HMSO, June 1981, p 4.

[2] 'Battle of Britain's Budget', *The Economist*, May 23 1981, p 14.

[3] 'Nott Trident', *The Economist*, January 10 1981, p 13; Julian Critchley MP, 'Mr Nott's Best Line of Defence', *The Guardian*, 12 January 1981. These fears formed a constant theme in the House of Commons' Fourth Report from the Defence Committee, Session 1980-81, *Strategic Nuclear Weapons Policy*, London: HMSO, 1981.

[4] See further Dan Smith, *The Defence of the Realm in the 1980s*, London: Croom Helm 1980, Chapter 5.

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forces. Secondly, the services must balance their continental and oceanic roles, stemming from Britain's alliance commitments to NATO in West Germany and in the eastern Atlantic. Thirdly, there must be balance between the services, with the land forces committed mainly to the Rhine Army and to home defence, the air forces to home defence and a variety of air and maritime strike and interdiction roles, and the naval forces to eastern Atlantic and Channel defence and to the 'independent nuclear deterrent'. Fourthly and not least, there must also be balance within each arms branch between the combat forces' 'teeth' and their logistical 'tail' — transport and supply, training, development and other support functions.

> Conventional war in Europe is no longer seen as a brief interval between the ending of peace and a nuclear Armageddon

This is what 'balanced' forces are supposed to comprise. Defining them in this way takes many things for granted — that the weapons which we deploy and the alliance to which we belong are appropriate means of defence against the coalition of socialist states which is defined as the enemy, and that the result is meaningful national security and independence for Britain. These assumptions have formed the postwar consensus among governments from Attlee to Thatcher. In the long term they may yet bring catastrophe upon European civilisation. In the short term the present Government is in difficulty not so much because of the future cost of a few hundred million lives, as because of the current cost measured in pounds and pence.

The cost of 'balanced' forces

In the late seventies Britain's real military defence spending stood at about the same level as in the late forties. In the early fifties it was up to 50% greater; the peak came in 1953 at the height of the Korean mobilisation. After Korea real defence spending drifted downward, through the end of National Service, until the early sixties. In the early sixties there was an upward blip in the curve to accommodate the Polaris construction programme. By the end of the sixties with deployment of the Polaris fleet and the policy of withdrawal from 'East of Suez', real defence spending had returned to the late forties' level. There it stayed in the seventies until the Tory return to power in 1979.[5]

Thus while the national product has grown, the volume of British defence expenditures has tended to remain stable or decline. As a result the share of the national product devoted to defence has also tended to fall: 7% in 1950, about 10½% at the height of the Korean war effort, gradually sinking to about 5½% in the late seventies. But 5½% is still a great deal. It is much more than Britain was spending on defence at any time between 1921 and 1938. It is considerably more than the national product share devoted to military purposes today by any other NATO country except the United States.[6] After all, £11 billion is a huge sum.

At the same time, today's defence funds are stretched more tightly than ever before. £100 million today will buy you 100 main battle tanks, 10 combat aircraft or just one surface warship; each item would have cost a third or a quarter of that amount four or five years ago. Today's budget also buys and equips fewer men and women than at any time this century, as soldiering becomes more professionalised and more mechanised. Of the people and equipment purchased, a steadily falling proportion goes to make up the combat forces' 'teeth', because of the growing importance of a well organised and supplied logistical 'tail'.

Changes in military doctrine

Why has the cost of maintaining combat capability of 'balanced' forces become so prohibitive? This is often presented as a result of technological trends, making weaponry more and more complex and imposing greater and greater demands on both combat and logistical personnel. In fact technological sophistication is the effect, not the cause. The real problem is that in the world today international relations are being regulated increasingly by military force, that this is being reflected in changes in NATO military doctrine, and that this doctrine is deliberately raising the technological and logistical demands faced by the military.[7]

How have demands upon the military been changed? In nuclear affairs NATO strategy has moved away from the concept of mutual deterrence with each side in the nuclear balance relying upon an invulnerable 'second strike' capability for the assured destruction of an aggressor through massive, indiscriminate retaliation. Instead alliance strategy now stresses the possibility of 'limited' nuclear exchanges with selective targeting of weapons of mass destruction against the military forces and economic centres of the enemy,[8] a concept which demands the deployment of nuclear weapons systems of far greater versatility and sophistication in far greater numbers than the crude 'city-busters' deployed in the past. The Trident missile submarine system is a good example: it 'replaces' Polaris in roughly the same sense that the quartz clock replaces the hour-glass.

Changing military doctrines have also affected conventional requirements. Conventional war in Europe is no longer seen as a brief interval between the ending of peace and a nuclear Armageddon. On the contrary conventional forces must now be integrated with strategic and tactical nuclear forces and equipped for protracted fighting on a nuclear battlefield. In recent months the Reagan administration has also indicated that it will re-equip US forces to meet the contingency of protracted conventional war with the Soviet Union on a large scale. 'The new strategy', according to official sources, 'would require investing huge sums of money in weapons and ammunition, transport equipment and supplies. It would also require a vast mobilisation of manpower and revitalisation of the defence industry . . .'[9] This trend can also be linked with attempts to extend the role of NATO beyond the traditional NATO area through a Rapid Deployment Force requiring expensive new formations, stocks, basing and mobility.

To summarise, maintaining a given set of strategic roles has become more expensive because major wars have become more thinkable. In the increasingly warlike world of the 1980s Britain will not sustain her independent and alliance roles, with a 'balanced' structure of forces right across the military spectrum, without continuing force modernisation and substantial rearmament.

Back to the thirties?

Today's advocates of rearmament were yesterday's architects of appeasement. They remind us constantly of the 'lessons' of the thirties, of the Munich deal with Hitler, and of the belated struggle to destroy German fascism. They identify the Soviet Union as an expansionist dictatorship increasingly inclined to risk world peace in its pursuit of world domination, and they argue that the 'free world' must re-arm against this contingency.

The parallel with the thirties has some limited application. One similarity is that the thirties were also a period of radical change in military doctrines. The European powers moved away from excessive faith in mutual deterrence towards a heightened awareness of the likelihood of war. The European statesmen of 1918 thought that war had become so costly to each side, that only a madman would start a new one. Nazi Germany confounded them. This was not because Hitler was mad, but because he understood how to combine the new technology of warfare (armour, mobility and airpower) with the

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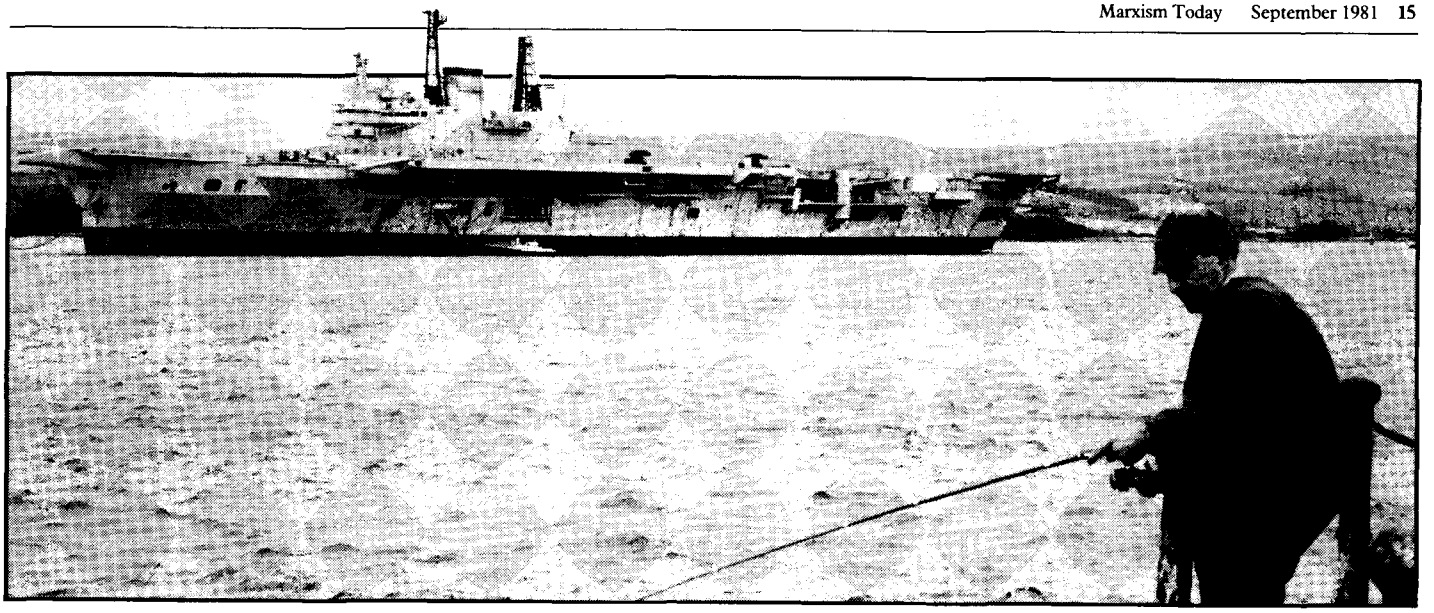

element of surprise in order to fight aggressive wars quickly, cheaply and effectively from the point of view of the aggressor. In the same way today we experience a heightened awareness of the likelihood of a major war, and this awareness is closely tied to new military doctrines for 'selective' first-strike nuclear warfare and 'limited nuclear options'.

Secondly, in the thirties as in our own time the demands of rearmament clashed with the demands of financial orthodoxy. Rearmament became the only insurance against surprise attack, but balanced budgets and depressed tax yields left little room for decisive increases in military spending until monetarist constraints were overriden by imminent war. Modern weapons lend particular urgency to calls for rearmament, because their destructive power, range and speed of delivery make surprise a decisive factor in modern strategy. Any interval between the onset of international crisis and the deciding offensive in war might be measured only in days; any state prepared to participate in such a war must have made its preparations in more placid times.

Thus changes in military doctrine and calls for rearmament lend force to the parallel between today and forty years ago. But when we come to identify the actors on the world scene, the parallel becomes deeply misleading. The common analogy drawn between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany is wrong. The Soviet pursuit of national security and international influence has not been fired by illusions of racial supremacy, or calculated upon the quest for economic plunder. The West has had far more at stake in the oil-fields of the Persian Gulf than the Soviet Union.[10] The pioneers of 'limited' nuclear war hold office in Washington, not in Moscow. The destabilising initiatives in the arms race are being made by NATO, not the Warsaw Pact, although this does not absolve Soviet leaders from responsibility for heightened tensions over the SS-20 missile, Poland and Afghanistan.

Another misconception in the parallel with the thirties concerns Britain's position, which has changed radically. As Angus Calder has written, 'when Britain "stood alone" in 1940, she stood on the shoulders of several hundred million Asians.'[11] Four decades of imperial decline have taken all that away. Britain's economic decline has been just as striking. There is no longer the material basis for the pre-eminent productive effort which the British people made, together with the peoples of the dominions and colonies, between 1938 and 1945. Today Britain is trying to lead the second division of military powers on a third-rate economic basis. It is not hard to predict inevitable stress as the result.

Forward in the eighties?

If the Government goes ahead with its existing defence projections, what would be the likely impact upon Britain's shrinking economy? The share of defence spending in the national product will almost certainly rise. The increase will depend not just on defence spending by itself, but also on the behaviour of the national product, and on the relative cost of producing (or importing) military goods and services compared to civilian products. Dan Smith and Ron Smith have estimated that on moderate assumptions defence spending will be using up 7.2% of gross domestic product by 1990 (taking the eighties as a whole, this assumes that real spending on military goods and services will grow at 3% a year, their relative price at 2% a year, and GDP at 1% a year).[12] A defence share of 7.2% would mean a level of economic mobilisation equivalent to 1938 or 1950. In fact 7.2% is an underestimate since it leaves out the effect of the current recession, which is to lower the baseline for GDP projections through the rest of this decade. Even optimistic March 1981 Budget forecasts of economic growth up to 1983, coupled to a 1% annual growth projection thereafter, would now raise the defence share to nearly 9% by 1990 — Korean war levels of economic mobilisation, without any particular war in sight.

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[5] This picture is obtained by linking indices of real military defence spending at constant 1963 prices and 1975 prices to be found in *National Income and Expenditure* for various years, London: HMSO.

[6] To calculate defence shares in Britain's GNP in the prewar years see London & Cambridge Economic Service, *The British Economy: Key Statistics 1900-1970*, London: Times Newspapers, 1970. For the postwar period see *National Income and Expenditure* for various years. NATO comparisons are shown in *Defence in the 1980s: Statement on the Defence Estimates 1980*, Vol 1, Cmnd 7826-I, London: HMSO, April 1980, p 86.

[7] Two other contributory factors are the growing use of military technology to combat internal terrorism and civil disturbances, and the influence of arms manufacturers in promoting the technology of repression and warfare to their own private profit.

[8] For background see Leon V Sigal, 'Rethinking the Unthinkable', *Foreign Policy* No. 54, Spring 1979.

[9] 'US Said to Revise Strategy to Oppose Threats by Soviet', *New York Times*, April 19 1981.

[10] The CIA has now admitted its great underestimate of Soviet oil reserves and production capacity, which in turn undermines the NATO analysis of Soviet oil import needs as a 'rationale for the Soviet moves to bring troops closer to the Persian Gulf'. 'CIA Revises Estimate, Sees Soviet as Oil-Independent Through 80s', *New York Times*, May 19 1981.

[11] Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945*, London: Panther 1971, p 22.

[12] 'Polaris Replacement and the Defence Budget in the 1980s', Memorandum submitted by Dan Smith and Ron Smith, in House of Commons, *Strategic Nuclear Weapons Policy*, p 286.

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How would a sudden surge of rearmament affect the economy? In theory the resources for an increased military effort can come from reduced unemployment and reduced underutilisation of industrial capacity. Rearmament could help to reflate the economy and push economic growth above existing forecasts. This outcome would require some obstacles to be overcome. There is some evidence from the past that sudden increases in defence spending can hit supply bottlenecks in key investment goods industries, forcing a shift of existing industrial capacity away from producing investment goods to producing goods for the military (for example in mechanical engineering, electronics and telecommunications, shipbuilding and aero-space). Increased defence spending would directly reduce the availability of resources for investment. But at present these sectors have substantial excess capacity, and in any case there seems no reason why capacity should not adjust to increased demands in the long run.[13] A more serious long term problem associated with arms spending is not its preemption of industrial capacity but its pre-emption of resources for research and development, with defence contracts diverting British management from the overdue tasks of innovating modern technology for socially useful civilian production.[14]

The biggest obstacle to rearmament through reflation is government economic policy. The Thatcher administration remains committed to avoiding a public-sector-led reflation of the economy. This means that in the first instance it must find the resources for an increased military effort by cutting back other areas of public spending. But resistance to further cuts in social programmes — from Ministerial 'wets', from public sector employees (especially in local government), and from those involved in the maintenance of public order — is now very strong. If public spending cannot be further reduced on non-military items, then military spending will require increased taxation, cutting private consumption and investment and causing further damage to the civilian economy. If the pressure against heavier taxation of the private sector also continues to mount, the government will then be unable to increase defence spending at all.

In summary, there are powerful barriers to the increased militarisation of the economy which the Government must seek, if it wishes to secure modernised, 'balanced' military forces and balance its finances at the same time. Failure to reconcile the financial and military balances holds out the prospect of the worst possible outcome for the military. This outcome would mean no fundamental review of defence commitments and no basic revision of officially accepted ideas of 'balance' in force structure, but also no significant increase in resources for the military; no restoration of the services' effectiveness or morale; the perpetuation of imbalances between overcommitted

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combat forces and their overstretched equipment, staffing and training, and logistical 'tail'; continued instability of weapons acquisition policy and of defence industry order books; continued deployment of an independent nuclear strike force without the slightest possibility of independent national survival of a nuclear war; continued dissension in the defence community and more broadly in British politics over Britain's proper role within NATO and in her own right; in short, carry on as you were.

The present moment and the Left

Has the June 1981 defence review found the magic formula that will resolve at a stroke these persistent and deep-seated dilemmas? I think probably not. The Navy's equipment and manpower are to be cut, but not the scope of its commitments (in one respect they are to be increased, with the dispatch of an aircraft carrier squadron to the Indian and South Atlantic Oceans to reinforce the American presence there). The Navy cuts amount in total to less than a decisive shift in inter-service balance.[15] In the main they are an attempt to revise the force structure within the Navy to allow it to do its present jobs more cheaply and more effectively. American Naval sources are described as sceptical that the plan will succeed and 'shaken' by the implications for themselves.[16] On the other hand British defence contractors are unmoved by the news.[17] The Defence Ministry has failed once more to grasp the nettle of a major cutback in strategic aspirations and military commitments. Consequently the Navy cuts will prove too small to provide significant financial freedom of manoeuvre, while the remaining Naval forces will continue to fall short of their tasks.

The Left can take comfort from the difficulties faced by the Thatcher administration in seeking further militarisation of the economy. These difficulties stem from strong civilian claims to priority in economic life, and they form a structural barrier to militarism which will be dismantled only with great effort. In the meantime, the disarmament movement can take advantage of the clash between the Government's warlike aspirations and the economic realities to win real reductions in arms programmes and military commitments.

However, long term advantage in the struggle against militarism will only be realised on the basis of a long term perspective. A short term pursuit of negative, oppositional demands may eventually favour the Right, not the Left. While pursuing policies of arms reduction we need to show understanding of the kind of military forces and civil-military balance that we should aim for. Without this, we risk alienating three sets of people who could form part of a democratic alliance for social change. Workers in the arms industries need reassurance that they and their skills will find creative social use and not be thrown on the scrapheap. A section of the armed forces must be won to a democratic model of the role of the military, and to an alternative idea of the pursuit of national security. Millions more who would like to see Britain steer a course of self-determination, non-aligned between East and West, need to know how this course could be defended.

While pursuing policies of arms reduction we need to show understanding of the kind of military forces and civil-military balance that we should aim for

We need to develop the alternative economic strategy to show how the economy can expand in a non-militarised way, producing goods and services for peaceful purposes. A start has been made in showing how arms industry skills and technology could be converted to socially useful civilian production by workers involved in alternative corporate planning at Lucas Aerospace and Vickers.[18] By the same token we also need an alternative military policy in order to show how we understand the role of armed forces in a more democratic society. How would we defend the independence of a Britain perhaps moving towards fundamental social change — given the present strains and tensions within the military establishment, given the chill winds blowing outside in an increasingly unstable and polarised world, given the great need for greater international cooperation based on non-military exchanges? Here a start has been made by the Labour Party Defence Study Group,[19] but the questions raised are so many and so fundamental that the way forward is still very unclear. □

[13] On the economic effects of defence spending generally see Ron Smith, 'Military Expenditure and Capitalism', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, March 1977.

[14] 'Industrial and Employment Implications of Polaris Replacement', Memorandum submitted by Mary Kaldor, in House of Commons, *Strategic Nuclear Weapons Policy*, p 293.

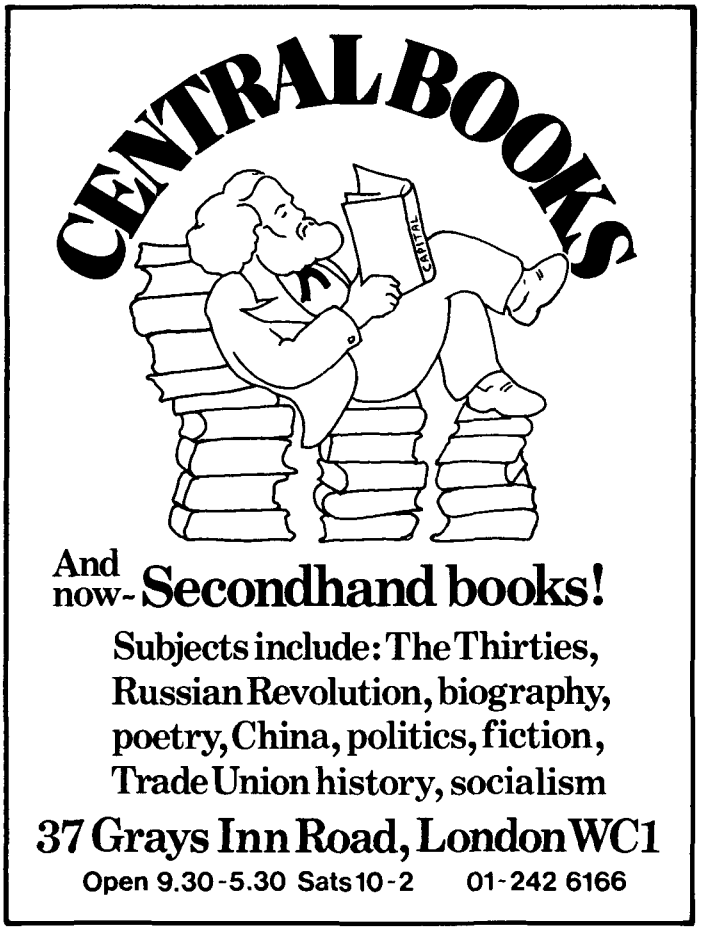
[15] Such a shift could have been signalled by additional economies in the nuclear hunter-killer submarine building programme, and in the maritime air strike forces. 'Replacing the Polaris Force: The Cost and the Consequences', Memorandum submitted by David Greenwood, in House of Commons, *Strategic Nuclear Weapons Policy*, p 55.

[16] 'In the Once-Mighty Royal Navy, a Sense of Despair', *New York Times*, July 4 1981.

[17] 'Electronics Defuse the Navy Cuts', *Sunday Times*, 28 June 1981.

[18] Lucas Aerospace Shop Stewards Combine Committee, *Lucas: An Alternative Plan*, Spokesman Pamphlet No. 55; Huw Beynon and Hilary Wainwright, *The Workers' Report on Vickers*, 1979.

[19] M Kaldor, D Smith, S Vines, eds, *Democratic Socialism and the Cost of Defence*, London: Croom Helm 1980.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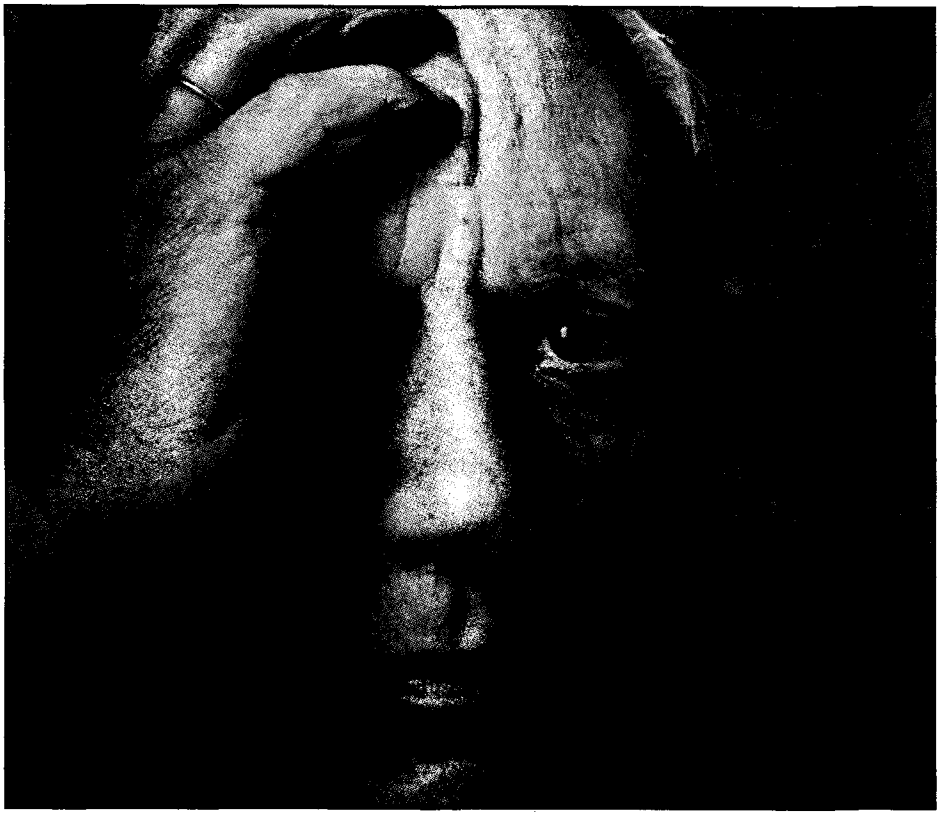

Picasso

Simon Watney

Picasso was not just a great artist; he revolutionised the way we look at art

When Picasso died in April 1973 he left no will. In place of ordinary death duties the French government accepted a huge selection of his own work from the estate, a generous selection of which makes up the large exhibition, 'Picasso's Picassos', which is on show at London's Hayward Gallery until mid October. For the first time in nearly two decades it is possible to see a representative collection of his work in many media, including paintings, drawings, prints and sculpture. It is therefore an opportune moment to consider the Picasso legend, and to think about his place in twentieth century culture. For no other figure demonstrates so clearly the changes which have taken place in this century to the idea of what it means to be an artist.

His career raises a number of important questions. Why, for example, are different periods in his exceptionally long working life admired so fervently by different groups of people and why is there such a strange disparity between the fame which surrounds his life, and the reputation of his actual works? Why again is it so widely assumed that one needs some special kind of knowledge to appreciate his pictures — why, in the end, does he remain such an astonishing and important artist?

Let's begin with the artist's name, Picasso. Everyone has heard of him in one way or another. His signature wriggles its way through a massive publicity campaign which has been in full swing for well over half a century. Whilst in galleries and sales-rooms, as reproductions and in bank deposit vaults, a little squiggle of paint or carbon guarantees massive investment and aesthetic value at one and the same time. It is arguable that the story of how he would pay for a meal by doodling on a napkin which would then be worth more than the restaurant is one of the most revealing cultural myths of our times . . . For that name holds together a host of extraordinary, and frequently incompatible reputations — 'man of genius', 'artist of the century', 'fraud', 'communist', 'billionaire', 'great lover', and so on. Picasso, then, is still very much 'news'. He remains a highly controversial figure in a host of ways to a host of audiences. However, it is important to be able to distinguish between the media creation of a man whose private life was acted out as dramatically as that of any film-star, the artist as constructed by a busy industry of art historians dividing his career up into separate style and periods, and the range of social issues with which he was permanently engaged.

Early days

We should probably begin by thinking about the earnest and precociously gifted young artist who first arrived in Paris from his native Barcelona in 1900. He was an outsider in at least three senses — as a foreigner, as an anarchist sympathiser, and as a painter at a time when it was far from clear what kind of professional future there might be in painting. In the course of the next few years he interpreted his experience of life on the margins of French society through a bewildering variety of styles of painting which had previously been reserved for the most wealthy and privileged of patrons. He painted peasants as if they were minor deities, and invested the poor with all the fabulous connotations of poetry and romance which he could cull from his extensive knowledge of the history of European art. In the work of the so-called Rose and Blue periods we can see him adhering to the general tradition of nineteenth century Realist art, with its strong emphasis on the social functions of subject matter. Realists such as Courbet and Daumier had acknowledged the existence of a class-divided world by insisting that painting should be concerned with a very different set of themes and values than those expected within the prevailing system of patronage. Not surprisingly the patrons reacted violently to this questioning of their traditional power to define the role and even the nature of art. One immediate consequence of this new conflict of interests was the emergence of a new type of artist who was no longer employable within the bourgeois art market. Such painters were forced to eke out a precarious existence on the fringes of bourgeois culture, looking increasingly to writers and critics in a similar displaced social situation to themselves in order to validate their work and position. It was in this situation that Picasso's most popular early works were produced — works in which the artist becomes as it were a natural ally of the working classes, in a state of exile from the traditional social roles and institutions of European painting.

The break with tradition

Picasso was not content, however, simply to go on allegorising French social life like a nineteenth century painter, through a set of

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basically aristocratic and religious symbols, though one can see how he frequently returned throughout his working life to the troubled role and identity of the artist in a society which had denied him his traditional position and prestige. In this sense Picasso represents a classical image of the modern artist as an exile within his or her own society. But his understanding of that marginalisation was much more radical than that of his contemporaries, and instead of simply continuing to fight a class struggle out on the level of cultural symbols and allegories, Picasso began to work away at the very idea of representation itself upon which bourgeois culture was, and is, so dependent. What he effectively did was to place a large question mark over the notion of *sight* as it had dominated western aesthetics for centuries. Painters might have disagreed radically about style and subject matter, but none had previously questioned the very idea of *seeing*. And this is all that the word Cubism really means, an acknowledgment that a painting is not a mirror, but, as Picasso once said, an '*equivalent* of nature'. In these works Picasso simply and dramatically denied the assumption that art must necessarily imitate nature, and in so doing he inevitably forces us to think about what we mean by the concepts of both 'art' and 'nature'. As he explained to a friend: 'an artist should observe nature, but never confuse it with painting. It is only translatable into painting by signs'. By signs he meant the process by which individual brush-marks are made to stand for objects in the real world. In other words he was exploring the issue of how it is that we read images, the issue of what we mean when we casually talk about 'representation' as if it were the most natural and unproblematic thing in the world.

Changing reality

His Cubist pictures and sculptures then, are as much about the process of *looking*, as they are about the objects which are supposedly before our eyes. If we look for example at any of the sketches for the celebrated Demoiselles d'Avignon of 1907, we can immediately understand what he meant when he explained to another friend that 'a head was a matter of eyes, nose, mouth, which could be distributed in any way you like — a head remained a head'. But Picasso's formal innovations, his breaking down of the human body into its most rudimentary yet instantly recognisable elements, were never pursued for their own sake. The social role of subject matter was always of crucial importance to him. There is thus no question of seeing Picasso's work as 'abstract'. For even when his pictures are pushed to the furthest point of fragmentation he is concerned with the *active* role of the viewer. And it was for that reason that he began to introduce pieces of the real world into his paintings and sculpture, in order to make them more comprehensible. The use of collage — bits of wallpaper or newspaper, old tickets and labels and so on, enabled him to play a whole new series of games between different notions and styles of representation. Thus a piece of wood-grained paper, for example, could stand for the substance of a table, just as a strip of actual wall-paper could indicate the existence of a wall, and hence a room. It is such clues, and the increasing reliance upon more traditionally recognisable elements from the visible world, which allow us to unscramble the basic meanings of his pictures. At the same time it is important to stress that Picasso's pictures are invariably open ended in so far as they depend at least as much on what we bring to them as upon his own intentions.

Having deconstructed the world into an endless series of signs in his Cubist works, and having broken once and for all with the traditional ways of representing space, Picasso was free from the nineteen twenties to proceed to reconstruct a new world of his own making, a world in which the most fantastical and extraordinary transformations can occur to people and objects at any moment. Just as in a Cubist still life a single circular mark may simultaneously stand for the top of a bottle as well as a slice of lemon, so in his later work he delighted in playing the most elaborate yet at the same time deadly serious games with human anatomy. In this way we are quite literally confronted with the world of sexual desire in all its variations. Indeed it would not be an exaggeration to say that no artist has ever turned his or her attention so relentlessly to the world of human sexuality. It is therefore ironic that so much attention has been payed to Picasso's own marriages and amatory adventures, and so little to the profound implications of his work in the context of twentieth century sexual politics.

> In effect he only exchanged one kind of rejection for another, spending most of his adult life excluded from ordinary society by his very wealth and fame

Picasso's work then is in an important sense as much about representation as it is about what he was representing. Unlike many of those artists he influenced, Picasso never lost sight of the world of social experience. On the contrary, few if any twentieth century artists have been so totally bound up with the major preoccupations of our age. In this sense his career looks in retrospect almost like an inventory of modern social, sexual and political preoccupations. It would therefore be entirely wrong to criticise him for having failed to come up with some kind of heroic social realism in an age which precisely denies the possibility of establishing strong unifying symbolic systems. In fact his most self-consciously 'public' works tend to be his least successful, stretched uneasily between his own interests as a painter and the sense of obligation to an audience from which he had always been excluded. Picasso's politics emerge in his work not in the crude sense of the illustration of particular incidents or ideas but in his total concern with the relation between how we see the world and how it is habitually represented. In recent years feminists and gays in particular have stressed the political significance of the ways in which we learn our identities from reading and internalising social imagery. Picasso's entire career was involved with a very similar set of concerns. He tried to involve his audience directly in situations usually seen as private or 'personal'. It was precisely the way in which he acted out his own feelings on the public stage of his own canvases which makes him such a lastingly significant artist.

Picasso's early work was the product of his own sense of poverty and social exclusion. His growing reputation after the First World War depended upon a wholly new system of establishing artistic celebrity. The value of his work was defined not by public demand but by the evaluations of critics, writers and art historians. In effect he only exchanged one kind of rejection for another, spending most of his adult life excluded from ordinary society by his very wealth and fame! We should not blame Picasso if his work has been taken up and written about in such a way as to exclude most people.

At the turn of the century Picasso had tried to create a grand allegorical art which would explain and reveal the contradictions of the world as he found it. But since there was no social space into which such an art would fit, he sensed that he had failed, and in a rage he proceeded to smash the whole idea of what art is to pieces. From the fragments of that rage he reassembled one of the most powerful symbolic languages of our times. In totally rejecting the notion that art should, or even can be a mirror to the world, Picasso opened up an entirely new and exciting range of possibilities both for artists and for the public. □

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Trade Unions and the Recession

David Winchester

Few members, activists and leaders in the trade union movement can now doubt that they face the most severe problems and the most hostile political and economic environment for fifty years. In manufacturing industry, the continuing decline in output and investment has been accompanied by rapidly increasing unemployment and widespread factory closures that starkly reveal the extent to which the deindustrialisation of Britain has developed. In the public sector, expenditure cuts and the more stringent financial control mechanisms have already undermined the job security and living standards of workers and threatened the social wage of all working class families. Restrictions on the legality of traditional trade union methods of organisation and expressions of solidarity in industrial disputes have been introduced in the Employment Act. More anti-union legislation has been promised, no doubt to encourage the more aggressive and concerted employers' strategies against workplace trade unionism that have developed in many sectors.

These major attacks on jobs, living standards and trade union rights have given rise to relatively little industrial militancy at the workplace. Trade union acquiescence and demoralisation have been more widespread than active resistance or mobilisation and where significant trade union victories have occurred, they have not provided the focus or stimulus for widespread struggle (for example, compared with the impact of the UCS workers' victory and the miners' wage militancy in the early 1970s). At national level, while the TUC has developed a coherent alternative economic and industrial strategy, union leaders cannot believe that it commands the support and commitment of the mass of their membership at this time. Equally, while the Left views the struggle for power and the attempt to extend democracy within the Labour Party as a crucial stage in the longer term political advance of the labour movement, such activity almost inevitably appears as a short term diversion away from a more sustained opposition to government policies. It is presented as such, not just by the mass media obsessed by the internal conflicts of the labour movement, but also, of course, by the right wing leaders in the Parliamentary Labour Party and in major unions.

This depressing view of the trade union response to the current crisis of British capitalism is not altogether surprising. World economic recession and the specific economic and political strategy of the Thatcher government that emerged from the disillusion and defeat of the Wilson-Callaghan administration, scarcely provide a congenial environment for trade union advances. However, it is an oversimple and one-sided perspective. A closer analysis of recent developments in trade union organisation and practice — one that explores changes in workplace organisation, industrial struggles and the role of the TUC — does not lead obviously to more optimistic conclusions. It does, however, identify important variations and contradictions in trade union practice and suggests that their resolution over the next few years is by no means predictable. Alongside the immense difficulties facing a weakened trade union movement is a growing awareness of the need for new strategies, the organisation to sustain them and the recognition that previous patterns of sectional workplace struggles and limited political engagement will be insufficient in the 1980s.

The focus of this article is therefore much more limited than recent contributions to *Marxism Today* that have analysed the emergence and nature of Thatcherism and the preconditions for a broad labour movement alternative strategy.[1] Its starting-point must be the dramatic transformation of the material and ideological context of trade union organisation and practice that have been generated by economic recession and changes in management and government policies. The central argument is really about the scale of the changes needed if trade unions are to successfully defend their members' jobs, standards of living, working conditions and trade union rights: it concerns the limitations of collective bargaining under mass unemployment.

SHOP STEWARDS AND WORKPLACE TRADE UNION ORGANISATION

Trade union history in Britain shows a changing balance between the organisation of narrow sectional interests and broader patterns of solidarity and expressions of common purpose. However, in the postwar period of full employment, it can be argued that British trade unionism strengthened its base in the workplace and resisted attempts to develop more centralised or co-ordinated activity. In contrast to most other comparable trade union movements, workgroups and their shop stewards developed considerable autonomy from official trade union structures. For the well organised groups of manual workers, in key sectors of manufacturing, the policies of their national unions or the TUC were often viewed as an irrelevance or even a constraint on their workplace activities.

By the mid 1960s, the contradictions of workplace trade unionism should have been apparent to the Left. First, it was obvious that wage struggles developed largely in isolation from one sector or another. Indeed, within many parts of manufacturing industry, the involvement of shop stewards and workgroups in fragmented bargaining, often based on the negotiation of piecework prices and bonuses, meant that the limits of trade union solidarity scarcely extended beyond the section or department in which they worked. At the same time, there were important examples of the emergence of joint shop stewards' committees at plant level and the possibility that

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parochialism would be further reduced by the development of company-wide combine committees.

Second, it was often argued that workplace trade unionism was largely economistic in its orientation — it expressed a primary focus on wage movements and differentials and little concern with wider political issues. However, in addition to providing a secure base for the improvement of living standards by resisting wage restraint policies, workplace trade unionism also involved a continuing challenge to managerial prerogatives at the point of production. It emphasised the defence of protective work practices and facilitated resistance to piecemeal management plans for rationalisation and government policies for productivity bargaining.

Third, while the emergence of independent shop stewards and workplace organisation exposed major conflicts within individual trade unions, as well as various forms of inter-union competition, it provided an essential basis for wage struggles given the predominance of right wing leadership in many unions for much of this period. If the fragmentation of workplace union organisation prevented more co-ordinated trade union policies, then it also discouraged the corporatist inclinations of national leadership. Or to express the point more positively, it eventually encouraged a more decentralised and democratic pattern of union policy-making by emphasising the close contact between trade union members and shop stewards.[2]

The sectionalism or parochialism of workplace trade unionism can thus easily be understood and justified in terms of the political and economic conditions in which it developed in the 1950s and 1960s. It is more difficult to identify the most significant changes in trade union organisation and practice in the last decade or so, and to analyse the problems facing shop stewards in the vastly different conditions today. This is partly because the recession has had an uneven impact on trade union organisation in different sectors (and only a very recent effect in some areas) and also because the 'centre of gravity' of the British trade union movement has been shifting from manufacturing and nationalised industries to non-manual workers and the public service sector, where workplace organisation is often a recent and less visible phenomenon.

It is clear that the involvement of trade union leadership in the pay restraint policies of the last Labour government had a considerable impact on workplace trade unionism. The role of TUC leadership in the design and implementation of the 1975-77 incomes policies was inevitably a major factor in the demobilisation of shop stewards' initiative and the decline in wage militancy, already undermined by the rapid increase in unemployment at that time. What is less widely understood and less often discussed within the labour movement is the impact of employers' strategies on shop steward organisation.

Employers' strategies and shop stewards

In key sectors of manufacturing industry, management has been successful in reforming collective bargaining structures and wage payment systems in ways that have undermined the source of shop stewards' power — however limited and fragmented — that caused them so much concern in the late 1960s. As the most recent large scale survey shows, multi-plant firms, often in highly concentrated industries with significant foreign ownership, have developed much more sophisticated industrial relations strategies. These have included a decisive move to single-employer bargaining, a more systematic application of work measurement and job evaluation techniques and the introduction of more formal disputes procedures at the place of work.[3]

The impact on workplace trade unionism and shop steward organisation has been profound. In larger factories especially, and for white collar as well as manual workers, shop stewards have become involved in more complex organisations. It is clear that management had the most important influence on these developments — through their support for more formal closed shop and check-off arrangements, facilities for time-off for union duties and the development of joint consultative and health and safety committees. The number of full time shop stewards probably quadrupled in ten years and many became involved in more hierarchic committee structures.

To oversimplify a complex, variable and contradictory development, management 'sponsorship' of shop steward facilities and procedural arrangements emphasised formalisation at the plant or factory level (firmly resisting most multi-plant committee claims for recognition) and often encouraged divisions or distance between senior shop stewards and their members. In a worsening economic environment, it became possible for corporate management to bypass the joint procedures they had earlier encouraged with little fear of collective or co-ordinated resistance.

These changes have not emerged from a consistent, planned or co-ordinated 'employers' offensive' in manufacturing industry. The evidence suggests that they have resulted from government intervention — especially incomes policies and employment legislation — and the increasing concentration of British manufacturing industry. If the development of more specialist industrial relations management has been the most pervasive influence on the formalisation of workplace trade unionism, we can also see how the struggles of shop stewards themselves, and the attempts in many trade unions to reform official structures and encourage the involvement of shop stewards in policy-making, have often led in the same direction. Thus, while the close proximity between union members and shop stewards, sustained by their daily involvement in developing and defending the custom-and-practice of the workplace, may have been fractured, it is apparent that many convenors and senior stewards are now more closely involved in official trade union structures. The dangers of incorporation of shop steward leaders, by management and national union leadership, coexists with a more substantial basis for trade union solidarity.

These changes in shop steward organisation have been most dramatic in large manufacturing companies — especially in the engineering industries — where trade union wage militancy and other expressions of trade union consciousness offered the most obvious resistance to managerial power in the more favourable economic conditions of the 1950s. Related developments have, of course, occurred in parts of the public sector and elsewhere. In many of these cases, the shop steward organisation sponsored by management or union leadership (often both), in situations where workplace organisation had been less developed or non-existent, is inevitably more fragile. It has, however, resulted in more decentralised bargaining, more democratic union policy-making and, as the increasing conflict in local government and the health service shows, less predictable patterns of trade unionism in the 1970s.

Impact on resistance

How have these changes in workplace trade union organisation affected the fight to protect jobs, living standards and trade union rights in recent years? First, it must be recognised that the ability to

[1] See especially, articles in *Marxism Today* by Martin Jacques, October 1979, Andrew Gamble, November 1980, and Bob Rowthorn, January 1981, and the more extended analysis of Sam Aaronovitch, *The Road from Thatcherism*, Lawrence & Wishart, London 1981.

[2] For a more theoretical and detailed consideration of these developments see Richard Hyman's, 'The Politics of Workplace Trade Unionism' in *Capital and Class*, 8, Summer 1979.

[3] William Brown (ed), *The Changing Contours of British Industrial Relations*, Blackwell, 1981.

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protect jobs through collective bargaining at plant or factory level is extremely limited.[4] Union negotiations typically attempt to avoid compulsory lay-offs by reducing overtime, limited sub-contracting, reducing the age of retirement, limiting new recruitment and agreeing to work-sharing and short-time working. Such policies attempt to protect the jobs of existing union members, but cannot slow down the reduction of job opportunities for school leavers and others in the community. In the more exposed sectors of the economy they have not been successful, even in terms of preventing redundancies. In such cases, the most visible trade union activity is the negotiation of compensation for redundant members; some involvement in the procedures for selecting workers to be laid-off; and exploring the possibility of redeployment or re-training.

> formalisation at the plant or factory level often encouraged divisions or distance between senior shop stewards and their members

The encouragement given by the TUC for negotiations to centre on demands for a reduction in working hours — the campaign for a 35-hour week — has been partly successful. The autumn 1979 national engineering stoppage was obviously crucial to the development of a genuine and widespread campaign, but while this dispute revealed an enthusiastic trade union commitment to the demand, it also generated a very strong and co-ordinated employers' resistance. The settlement embodied a limited, but important trade union gain, and there is now evidence that government and CBI exhortations to employers to resist reductions in working hours is not producing the desired concerted response. This is one area of struggle where collective bargaining, and the changes in workplace trade union organisation outlined above, can have an important impact on the defence of jobs if the momentum for a broadly based campaign can be sustained.

Active opposition to large scale redundancies and plant closures, has not occurred on a substantial scale; initial opposition has rarely been sustained for a long enough period and the few isolated examples of lengthy resistance have not been successful. The ability of union officials and activists to mobilise members for industrial action to preserve jobs has, of course, been undermined by redundancy payments. The attraction of compensation, especially for skilled workers, could be easily understood while reasonable prospects of alternative employment existed. However, the fatalism and defeatism encouraged by 'voluntary' redundancy over the last decade has made it more difficult to mobilise resistance in the current, deteriorating employment context.

Sporadic attempts to mobilise industrial action to prevent total plant closure raise even more fundamental questions about trade union organisation, ideology and power. Ten years after the historic example of the UCS work-in, it is difficult to identify more than a few cases of successful resistance to proposed plant closure that have had long term tangible benefits for the workforce and community. Even the best organised factories face enormous difficulties when corporate management is convinced that the impact of recession makes closure inevitable or desirable.[5]

New forms of co-operation and struggle

It is in this area that the changes in shop steward organisation assumes most importance. A more effective resistance to job losses and factory closures clearly demands a broader basis of union organisation than the workplace trade unionism that spearheaded the wage militancy of the 1960s. It depends upon more active inter-union co-operation, a closer involvement of shop stewards in community and political organisations and a strategy that links the problems of individual factories to the challenge of increasingly concentrated and, invariably, multi-plant corporate management.

It can be argued that the organisational base for such resistance now exists in many companies — however embryonic and fragile when set alongside the scale of the problems posed by corporate management in declining industries. The necessity of multi-union, multi-plant shop stewards' combine committees is now more widely accepted at all levels in the trade union movement. Examples of policies that go beyond the co-ordination of pay struggles to the analysis of investment policies, corporate strategies and the development of alternative workers' plans have emerged from the motor industry, aerospace, rubber and chemicals, power engineering, machine tools, ship-building and other sectors — and these initiatives are now more widely discussed and understood by shop stewards. Furthermore in Coventry, Newcastle, Liverpool and elsewhere, shop stewards' committees have developed a more substantial involvement in trades councils and other forms of local political organisation and mobilisation, and have emphasised the need for broader political movements to support their bargaining activities.[6]

It must be recognised that many of these positive developments in shop-floor organisation have grown out of the defeats and weakness of workplace trade unionism in recent years. They point to the ways in which trade union organisation and political involvement must be further developed, and with an increasing sense of urgency, given the vulnerability of isolated plant-level shop steward organisation and the evidence that the recession has provided the opportunity for senior managers to undermine the activities of the relatively few established combine committees that earlier promised more sustained resistance in some sectors.[7] It is to these wider struggles that we now turn.

INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLES

As the impact of government policies on jobs, living standards and trade union rights has become more direct, it can be argued that the potential for more extensive and co-ordinated resistance has been created. Recent experience suggests that this argument needs careful qualification and the danger that trade union strategies at sectoral level might develop in an isolated and fragmented way should be confronted directly.

Dealing first with the attack on jobs, it is no longer true that the impact of rising unemployment is largely concentrated in non-union or weakly-organised sectors of the economy. However, the burden of unemployment remains unequal — the dole queues still contain a disproportionate number of the oldest and youngest workers, the unskilled, those with poor health and others from ethnic minority groups. More important, deindustrialisation inevitably generates greater job losses in private and publicly owned manufacturing industries that are most exposed to international competition.

Turning to the public service sector, it must be remembered that job losses remained relatively small until well into the second year of the Thatcher government. Earlier rounds of public expenditure cuts had more impact on employment in the construction industry and on the quality of social services. The most recent cuts in local and central government will obviously have a much more drastic effect on employment — though even now, the impact will be very uneven in its effect on different departments, services and groups of workers.

The obstacles to the development of a more effective resistance to job losses at industry or sectoral level — and to the co-ordination of such strategies — can be easily stated. In the public service sector, the problem of job security is a relatively recent one and the strength of workplace organisation limited. In trying to mobilise widespread

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support to resist hospital closures and cuts in social services, trade unions have faced predictable hostility from right wing politicians and newspaper editorials (especially since the 'winter of discontent'), but they have not received consistent support from other sections of the trade union movement. In manufacturing industry, we have already discussed the way in which sectionalism and factory consciousness in well organised sectors inhibited the development of industry-wide organisation or initiatives. The attack on jobs in the motor and steel industries shows that even when trade unions are able to develop the organisation to resist job losses in a more co-ordinated manner and to develop alternative policies for their industries, activists still face formidable problems in involving other groups of workers in their struggles.

Wage militancy

Turning secondly to wage militancy — or its relative absence — two features of the last two years' bargaining should be emphasised. First, despite the alarming decline in output and employment, the living standards of workers, *on average*, were not reduced until very recently; there was a growth of real disposable income of around 2% between 1979 and 1980, for example, and reductions in real wages only began in the middle of 1980. The costs of recession have clearly been borne by the unemployed rather than the majority of employed workers so far.

Second, and just as important for the argument here, there seems to be increasing variations in the pay settlements of different groups. At the time of writing, pay rises in the manufacturing industries are averaging 8-9% (with very low settlements in exposed sectors), around 10-11% in private sector services (such as banking and finance) and between 7 and 13% in the public sector. Higher settlements have been reached in some of the nationalised industries, while in local government, the health service, education and the civil service, settlements have rarely exceeded 7%. These variations, largely reflecting the labour market position and industrial strength of different groups, provide some explanation of the limited extent to which the few major wage struggles have been able to generate support from other groups.

Is the low level of wage militancy a temporary phenomenon or does it suggest that trade unionists have made a decisive shift in their real wage expectations as a result of their weaker labour market position?

The answer to this question will depend very largely on what happens in public sector pay bargaining — just as the history of incomes policies (even the electoral prospects of governments) in the 1970s were crucially affected by the wage militancy of miners and public service workers. The experience of the last ten years also shows that it is possible to sustain policies that discriminate against public sector workers for a number of years (1970-3 and 1975-78), but with the strong likelihood that accumulated grievances, distorted relativities and the rejection of traditional criteria of comparability will lead to industrial unrest and large pay settlements designed to catch up lost ground.

Cash limits

In most respects, the imposition of cash limits in the public sector has had a very similar impact to the pay norms of earlier incomes policies; the apparent management flexibility to raise prices, reduce employment or services to influence the level of pay settlements is extremely limited and virtually absent in the tax-dependent public services. However, within the nationalised industries, it is obvious that ministers have built into the cash limits on the external financial requirement quite different pay assumptions, and ones which are based on a calculation of the prospects of successful industrial action. For the last two pay rounds, the vast difference in the treatment given to the British Steel Corporation and the National Coal Board illustrates this new development clearly.

It also suggests that for some time, at least, the government will be able to discourage a more concerted resistance to wage cuts across the public sector and where isolated major confrontations occur, to make a virtue out of the intransigence of ministers and an unwillingness to make significant pay concessions. Alan Fisher argued in this journal that the leadership and activists in NUPE calculated that industrial

action in local government and the health services offered little prospect of an increased pay offer above the 6% cash limit this year.[8]

Although the civil service unions have faced and largely overcome similar problems in sustaining their programme of industrial action for more than twenty weeks — government hostility, the low morale of members faced with increasing job insecurity and the negative impact of industrial action on other workers and their families — their eventual settlement was not much above the government's original offer. The civil service strike may yet prove to be a watershed in the development of trade union solidarity and militancy in this sector, but

[4] The argument is developed by Sam Aaronovitch in his May 1981, *Marxism Today* article, 'Unemployment — Halting the Slide'.

[5] For example, Tony Lane's discussion of the struggle at Dunlop's factory in Speke indicates many of these problems in *Plant Closure: The Trade Union Response*, (eds) Al Rainnie and John Stirling, Newcastle Upon Tyne Polytechnic, 1981.

[6] See *State Intervention in Industry: A Workers' Inquiry*, 1980.

[7] The most publicised example is, of course, that of British Leyland: see the interview with Derek Robinson in *Marxism Today*, March 1980.

[8] Interview with Alan Fisher, *Marxism Today*, March 1981.

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it also highlights the problems posed by Thatcher's public sector pay strategy; one that has elevated calculated and selective hostility against 'weaker' unions to the major focus of the policy.

Inevitably, the last few years have emphasised the *links* between wage militancy, the fight for jobs and the defence of protective working practices. Government calculations of the industrial power of trade unions (including the ability and willingness of national leaders to mobilise membership) are clearly revealed in the contrasting experiences of the steel and coalmining industries. The thirteen week strike in the steel industry in 1980, while partially defending the living standards of steel workers in employment, largely undermined the prospects of co-ordinated trade union resistance to massive job losses and reduced manning levels. In South Wales, the workforce has been halved in 18 months, the man-hours needed to produce a tonne of crude steel reduced from ten to five and the ISTC's *Plan For Steel*, brushed aside by the government-backed corporate plan.

> the Cabinet was not persuaded by the alternative policies of the NUM, but by the fear of the political consequences of a prolonged dispute with coalminers

The decisive action by the NUM earlier this year, in contrast, forced the government to relax the cash limits on the coal industry to avoid an escalation in pit closures. This impressive display of leadership and rank-and-file commitment provided a rare and positive example to the rest of the trade union movement at a time of widespread demoralisation. Whether the example can be easily emulated is doubtful — the unique industrial and political strength of the NUM and the way in which it is perceived by Conservative ministers, suggests not. It is also apparent that the Cabinet was not persuaded to alter its policies by the force of argument or alternative policies of the NUM, but by the fear of the political consequences of a prolonged dispute with coalminers and the impact this would have on working class mobilisation in some areas.

Employment Act

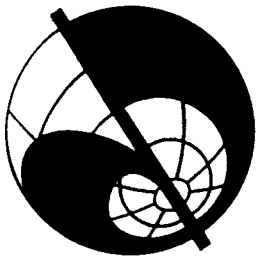
In the third area of government attack on the trade union movement — the legal restrictions embodied in the Employment Act and its associated Codes of Practice — there should be no assumption that the law will affect only particular sectors of the trade union movement. Obviously some groups of workers are more dependent on secondary action, picketing and the defence of the closed shop than others, but the legality of most forms of industrial action, expressions of solidarity and forms of trade union organisation will be threatened by the new law.[9] Two points of comparison with the 1971 Industrial Relations Act are worth consideration. First, the absence of any new legal machinery — such as the National Industrial Relations Court and the Register of Trade Unions created in 1971 — has probably made it more difficult to focus attention on and opposition to the new law this time.

Second, the Industrial Relations Act was rendered largely ineffective by the unwillingness of most employers to use its procedures, albeit in response to the widespread mobilisation of the trade union movement based around deregistration and non-cooperation with the NIRC. In the absence of such concerted trade union opposition and in the very different economic and political situation of the early 1980s, it would be foolish to assume that major employers will be so reluctant to seek legal injunctions this time. There is a distinct danger that the main purpose of the new law — to weaken trade union resistance to attacks on jobs and living standards — will not be fully understood in parts of the movement. In this area, as in others, activists should be demanding a more forceful and co-ordinated campaign from national leadership and the Trades Union Congress.

THE ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF THE TRADES UNION CONGRESS

A brief discussion of the changing role of the TUC in the last decade raises many difficulties, but also suggests some broad conclusions for evaluating its capacity for supporting workplace and industrial struggles. Quite clearly, the TUC enjoyed a significant increase in its internal authority over affiliated unions in the 1970s. The co-ordination of resistance to anti-union legislation involved Congress House in extensive propaganda campaigns, training of full-time officials and the crucial decision to *instruct* unions to de-register under the Industrial Relations Act. The Chequers and Downing Street talks with Heath in 1972, and the more sustained involvement with Labour Party representatives in the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee since then, encouraged a more detailed and expert development of policy and in the annual *Economic Review*, the most coherent and programmatic set of trade union demands that had been developed for a generation. From 1975, senior General Council leaders were also involved in new forms of 'representative government' — tripartite state agencies with executive, as well as advisory, functions. Throughout the period there was an extension of TUC services to affiliated unions — especially shop steward education — and potentially important organisational innovations, such as the development of Industry Committees and an embryonic regional structure.

These important developments pale into insignificance in the minds of activists when set against other TUC leadership policies in



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the mid and late 70s; namely, the operational involvement of the TUC leadership in the pay restraint policies of 1975-77, at a time of declining real wages and increasing unemployment. The capacity of the General Council to influence the bargaining policies of affiliated unions depended on its ability to impose trade union demands on the Labour government. From the middle of 1975, TUC demands were delayed, diluted or rejected by the Labour government. Although the accommodation between many union leaders and the Cabinet survived in some form into the 'winter of discontent', well before the 1979 election, TUC leadership expressed an uncertainty, fragmentation and disillusionment that was far removed from the image of partnership in the corridors of corporate power of a few years earlier.

Decline in influence

If the TUC was already being written off as a significant political force before the last election, then the main thrust of the Thatcher government's economic policies so far provides a further limitation on TUC activities and influence. By rejecting a formal administered incomes policy, the government avoids the need to negotiate the terms of TUC mediation between the state and organised labour. Monetarism, public expenditure cuts and deindustrialistion are designed to outflank rather than confront trade unions, as Andrew Gamble argued in this journal, by creating a slow demoralisation, defeatism and division.

TUC leaders cannot believe that their analysis of Britain's problems and their policy prescriptions will have any direct influence on the Thatcher government's strategy. Thus, the TUC must be judged in terms of its role in protecting and adapting trade union organisation and services, creating a more substantial consensus and commitment to alternative policies within the movement and campaigning to mobilise more effective resistance to government policies. These issues have already been discussed at two consultative conferences and are outlined in the General Council Report to the 1981 Congress — *TUC Development Programme*. It is important that they provide the focus for a widespread discussion in the labour movement.

First, though detailed figures are not yet available, most TUC affiliated unions will have lost membership during 1980-1. In the main general unions and others with large sections in declining manufacturing industries, the reduction may be 10% or more, thus signalling an end to a decade of the most vigorous period of trade union growth in postwar Britain.

Membership decline poses two obvious problems for the movement — there will be a serious limitation on the resources available for the development of services and campaigns and there may be a self-interested scramble on the part of larger unions to attract into amalgamations smaller unions that have become financially insolvent. Mergers between some of the hundred or more TUC unions should, of course, be welcomed if they are based on principles that support common interest, encourage economies of scale and minimise conflicts within, as well as, between unions. At present there seems to be a grave danger that this will not be the case if some proposed mergers take place, and it is unlikely that the TUC will be able to do anything about it.

Campaigning approach

The second broad area of concern raised in the consultative conferences centres on the way in which policy is developed and economic and social priorities determined within the TUC. The problem is to avoid centralisation of decision-making in the hands of a few General Council members by developing much wider processes of consultation and involvement in the movement, without losing the facility for decisive action. At the same time, more effective mechanisms must be developed to enable the General Council to determine priorities that command the confidence of activists while retaining credibility in negotiations with a future Labour government. Given the diverse occupational and industrial interests of TUC membership and the continuing political divisions within the General Council, these problems remain formidable ones. For this reason, the *TUC Development Programme* concentrates on ways in which the TUC can develop a more effective campaigning role to promote trade union policies and provide a focus for more active resistance to government policies.

> activists should be demanding a more forceful and co-ordinated campaign from a national leadership and the TUC

After the relative failure of the TUC Day of Action in May 1980, the People's March for Jobs, organised by the TUC's regional councils, can be judged an outstanding success and an encouragement to plan further lobbies, demonstrations and political activities to concentrate public attention on the impact of unemployment. Exclusion from Whitehall naturally increases the attraction of Trafalgar Square for trade union leaders, but the momentum and political impact of such campaigns will only be sustained if the more widespread, popular revulsion against government policies can be mobilised by a more effective TUC regional organisation.

The emphasis on the importance of the regions and an active campaigning role for the TUC is a major and positive initiative that needs widespread support from activists. Plans for a new collective bargaining information bulletin, including material on job security and new technology, more extensive membership education programmes (with special emphasis on young workers, new members, women and ethnic minorities) and the extension of the network of unemployed workers' centres are evidence of the extent to which the TUC has recognised the vastly different context in which its work must now be conducted.

Perspectives

Any survey of the response of the trade union movement to the current economic and political crisis in Britain is bound to draw attention to the major difficulties facing members and activists. The depth of the recession in manufacturing, the attack on the state sector and the calculated political hostility towards trade unions and working class families exhibited in most of the policies of the Thatcher government, cruelly expose the limitations of collective bargaining in defending jobs, living standards and working conditions.

However, the uncertainties and contradictions in government policies and the evidence that Britain's capitalist class lacks the self-confidence and cohesion to mount the kind of offensive that some Cabinet ministers would like to see, provides the opportunity for the trade union movement to move beyond the demoralised and stunned acquiescence that followed the last election. There are already indications that new forms of organisation, more effective campaigns and mobilisation and broader political alliances at all levels of trade union activity are developing to exploit this opportunity. Many of the most positive changes have resulted from piecemeal initiatives and recent defeats, but they provide the basis for a more substantial Left advance if they form the focus of widespread discussion and action in the trade union movement. □

[9] For a detailed analysis of the new legislation and the dangers it poses, see Roy Lewis and Bob Simpson, *'Striking a Balance?' — Employment Law After the 1980 Act*, Martin Robertson 1981.

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Discussion

Brixton and After

Ray Chatwin

I want to take up an aspect of Brenda Kirsch's article 'Brixton and After' (July issue, *Marxism Today*). The poor state of relations between black youth and the police is often reduced to the simple accusation that the police are 'racist'. The question of how and why the police are 'racist' is seldom discussed. Instead, racism is assumed to be an attribute of *all* policemen and to manifest itself in general and indiscriminate harassment and brutality. Certainly the police force, like any other institution in our society, contains outright racists and fascist elements. Many more, socialised into a disciplined and authoritarian profession, have a model of the upright, respectable, law-abiding citizen to which young, inarticulate and powerless people generally do not conform — especially young black people with a bouncy step, dreadlocks and tams (woolly hats). Police are likely to regard anyone in this category as deviant and to behave towards them accordingly.

There are three main problem areas in police-black youth relations which exacerbate racism and authoritarianism within the police force and which have created a deep distrust and even hatred of them on the part of black youth. These are the issues of crime, ganja (marijuana) and blues parties.

Crime

Inner-city areas are areas of urban decay, poor housing, lack of jobs and inadequate leisure facilities. In West London 40% of the unemployed are young blacks. Nationally young blacks are 50% less likely to get jobs than young whites, although in places like Toxteth with 37% unemployment, 47% of young blacks and 43% of young whites are unemployed. Inner-city aid has been poorly funded and is characterised by a lack of government commitment and a lack of co-ordination. The conditions in which young people exist are steadily worsening.

Young unemployed people live in a society which preaches consumerism and acquisitiveness and yet gives them no means of satisfying those desires. Increasingly, a reservoir of young people deprived of self-respect, bored and with no hope and nothing to lose is being created in our inner-cities. Hardly surprising therefore, that many such areas have a high crime rate. Street crimes such as 'dipping' (pickpocketing), bag-snatching, housebreaking, burglary, theft of and from cars, and shoplifting have reached epidemic proportions in some areas. The victims are more often ordinary people — some of them unemployed themselves — and small shopkeepers than the rich. People, both black and white, do not want this. The police are therefore under pressure to deal with it. They know that young people are the perpetrators of these crimes and they therefore stop and question 'suspicious' people who are often, though not always, entirely innocent.

The second problem relates to ganja which is officially classified as a dangerous drug. The cultivation and smoking of ganja is a widespread folk practice in the Caribbean though it remains illegal. Though there is ample evidence that ganja is really a stimulant similar in its effects to alcohol and tobacco, it continues to be classified with dangerous and addictive drugs such as heroin and cocaine. The police know that young blacks are users of ganja. Raiding of premises, stopping, searching and questioning of youths causes great friction. In enforcing the law as it stands, the police are attacking part of Caribbean culture, worsening relations between themselves and black youth and criminalising them. They should not be put in this position.

The third problem is the question of blues parties. Massive and often competing sound systems blasting out reggae at incredible volume are part of the culture of young Afro-Caribbean people both here and in the Caribbean. These parties often begin after midnight, warm up at about dawn and continue into the next day. This frequently takes place in terraced houses where neighbours, black and white, shift workers, children and the elderly are seriously inconvenienced. In addition, ganja smoking and the illegal sale of alcohol make blues parties prime targets for the attention of the police. Partygoers do not respond to requests to 'turn the music down' yet police are faced with demands from angry residents to put an end to the disturbance. It is hardly surprising that in such circumstances police are often reluctant to go alone.

Solutions

There are a number of solutions to these problems. Firstly, a policy of regenerating the inner-cities on the lines of the TUC policy document ('Regenerating Our Inner Cities', July 1981) must begin as soon as possible. This involves expansion of public sector job opportunities; increasing urban aid from £177m to £700m next year; genuine democratic participation in renewal schemes; expanding nursery provision; education relevant to a multi-cultural society; adult literacy and English as a Second Language provision; TUC Centres for the Unemployed; better NHS services in the inner-cities; better transport; a house building and renovation programme; equal opportunities policies and intervention by unions to ensure equal opportunities in the workplace. It could be that special bodies, democratic rather than bureaucratic, need to be created for a fixed period to deal with this programme, in much the same way that development corporations were set up for the New Towns.

Secondly, ganja needs to be removed from the list of dangerous drugs. If not actually legalised, its possession and use needs to be de-criminalised.

Thirdly, facilities need to be available for young black people to hold blues parties. Expansion of the number of licensed community centres and youth clubs as part of the inner-city renewal plan discussed above is the only way to remove the disturbance and illegal alcohol sales which bring young blacks

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into confrontation with the community and the police.

The steps outlined above would remove some of the material bases of police-black youth antagonism. Other steps still need to be taken. Community and race relations need to be discussed on all courses for police cadets and serving officers. Young and inexperienced police officers are also a problem in some places, particularly in the Metropolitan Police area. They should always work with an experienced police officer in sensitive areas.

The last important reform is the democratic control and accountability of the police force. The dangerous tendency for senior police officers to make inflammatory political statements must be stopped immediately. A second dangerous tendency is the growing autonomy of the police, a situation in which decisions on the role and style of policing are removed from the arena of public debate and local control. The police must not be allowed to control the people they are supposed to serve.

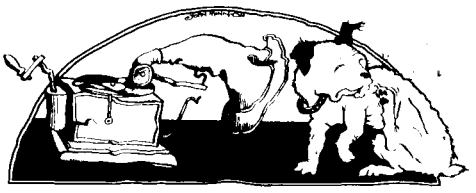
'Community policing' is not the same thing as democratic control and accountability. It is a method of intelligence gathering enabling police to identify 'trouble-makers' and to keep themselves informed of what goes on in the community; a method of 'soft' surveillance which often leads to interference in the affairs of the community and to an increased store of information in the police computer.

The Communist Party's strategy, which involves winning over substantial elements of the police force for democratic advance, demands a careful analysis of the police. We need to criticise specific acts of the police but not to indulge in a generalised attack on them. Such an attack would allow middle-of-the-road police officers to be won over by racist/authoritarian elements and would alienate considerable support from the majority of people, black and white, who support genuine law-and-order and who correctly regard the police as essential to any civilised society.

Following from the points made above, the potential of the present rioting for the progressive movement is nil. Disorder on this scale can only strengthen the Right through the need to 'assert the rule of law'. People are frightened by this kind of violence and an atmosphere is created in which the police have a free hand to employ whatever methods they wish. This contributes to the already dangerous tendency towards autonomy for the police force discussed above, increases the threat to civil liberties alarmingly and exacerbates racism among the population generally who blame the disorders on 'aliens' and tell themselves that 'Powell was right'.

The Music Industry in Crisis

PE Demetriou



David Laing's article (July *Marxism Today*) was an interesting assessment of the current crisis facing the British music industry and of its attempts to alleviate the effects of cheap imports, competition from independent labels, and home taping on sales and profits.

Quite correctly, he concentrated upon the activities of the big four multinationals, who are responsible for something like 60% of world sales, but this did inevitably mean that his coverage of the problems of the independents and remedies at grassroots level tended to be limited and oversimplified.

David Laing explained how the major labels had been hit by counterfeit pressings and cheap European imports, which had taken over 30% of the UK market. It is not only the majors who are being hit, however, and the independents like Rough Trade who have European links are facing similar problems. These records also have a detrimental effect in that they 'downgrade' the quality of the product, as they tend to be defective and badly packaged.

The response of the major labels to home taping has been more flexible than was suggested in the article. The BPI's attempt to press the Government into introducing a levy on tapes has always been regarded with scepticism by some of its members, and various companies have tried to cash in on the demand for taped music. RCA are experimenting with a I plus I range of cassettes, which have music on one side and blank tape on the other. EMI are also moving in on this side of the market by introducing the extended single on cassette. Much of this enthusiasm has been generated by the rising sales of portable mini-cassette recorders.

Independent labels

The growth and development of the independent labels is also under-estimated. It is a mistake to claim that they have been acting as an 'unofficial research and development arm of the industry'. Although there are many artists who have been discovered by the independents and then poached by the majors, this is hardly the norm. There are a great many acts who have found success by remaining with the independents. A glance down the top 30 best selling singles and albums charts would provide many examples of this.

The role of the multinationals in providing facilities for the manufacture and distribution of their material is also exaggerated. The example of two-tone records used, is more of an exception than the rule. The independents are usually based from small local shops like Small Wonder in London and Factory Records in Leeds and there is much co-operation between themselves over marketing and selling. Sometimes manufacturing and pressing deals are signed between the independents and the large companies, as in the case of Heartbeat Records and Cherry Red, but these tend to be temporary and only on a one-off basis. In no sense do they live off the backs of the majors as was implied in the article.

The role of the co-operative was rightly mentioned, but the efforts of successful artists to finance their own labels was sadly neglected. A prominent example of this is the anarchist band Crass, who have sold many records on their own label as well as promoting the work of others.

David Laing's ideas for a socialist strategy for the industry are on the whole, relevant and well thought-out. They include financial support to the alternative distributors, sanctions against many of the sharp practices within the industry, payments to artists along similar lines as authors receive under the Public Lending Rights system and legislation to ensure the equal availability of records. Another possibility might be the expansion of community arts provision, which could provide playing facilities for musicians, a pressing need in most towns and cities. Local community radio could also receive more financial support, which would in turn promote the activities of local artists.

Finally, the payment of performers and recording artists by the state would be a significant change, but would be of most benefit to the small minority of better known artists. This really needs to be coupled with a minimum performance fee. This would ensure that the majority of semi-professional and professional artists would receive a decent level of remuneration.

We welcome Discussion contributions on articles appearing in the journal.

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Reviews

BRITAIN'S BLACK POPULATION
The Runnymede Trust and The Radical Statistics Race Group
Heinemann 1980 160pp pb £4.95
ISBN 0 435 82782 0

LABOUR AND RACISM
Annie Phizacklea and Robert Miles
Routledge and Kegan Paul 1980 248pp pb £5.95 *ISBN 0 7100 0679 9*

Race is a political raw nerve — best avoided, rather than touched. The Tory government's proposed British Nationality Bill is the latest in a long line of racist immigration policies that, we are told, has nothing to do with race. It's the same old game — but with different categories; define degrees of 'Britishness' that bear an uncanny resemblance to black and white skins and call it 'nationality'. Sidestepping the issue of race is not new, it provides a way around the emotional minefield of race relations.

Runnymede Trust (and the Radical Statistics Race Group) are prepared to tackle the issue head on. *Britain's Black Population* cuts a hard, statistical path through the minefield to provide a factual picture of the position of black people in this country.

The opening chapter sets the groundwork for the ensuing discussion of racial disadvantage and the Government's response, by providing a detailed demographic account — size, births, deaths, age, sex — of the black population. The stereotype that *all* black people are immigrants is quickly exorcised, to give the reader in the following chapters, a detailed account of the material disadvantages black people experience in comparison to whites in the fields of employment, housing, education and social services. Well written and illustrated, this sober account provides a useful antidote to the myths of racist propaganda. (A wealth of further publications and statistical sources relating to race are included in the appendices for those wishing to develop a more comprehensive picture.)

Race and statistics is, however, an explosive mixture. This point is not lost on the authors, who are aware that statistics can serve more than one purpose. The final chapter faces up to the problem — a statistical picture of the disadvantages experienced by ethnic groups can be used just as easily by the Right to reinforce racist stereotypes of black people as a 'problem', as it can be used to inform government poicy in combating racial disadvantage. Justification for such fact-gathering lies with the state's record in achieving such reform. A casual glance at that record reveals that the interests of successive governments, both Labour and Tory, in racial statistics have stemmed from preoccupations with control, rather than concern. The statistical coverage of black people and health, housing or education is sparse in comparison to the research undertaken into population flow (read immigration control) and employment patterns (read labour requirements). Where social policies concerned with social disadvantage have been implemented, they have tended to take the form of blanket area policies (the Urban Programme, the Community Development Projects, Partnership schemes etc), rather than a recognition of the specific problems black people face in a white society.

The abuse of statistics is well known. In part it stems from the factual level of the framework itself. Within a statistical framework it is impossible to explain adequately racism and racial disadvantage. How, for example, could such a framework tell us why black labour rather than white was recruited by British industry in the 1950s, why racism is embedded in the white working class, or why black labour is over-represented, in comparison to white, in the worst paid and least desirable jobs? Statistics may offer useful insights which help to explain these patterns, but they cannot deliver the whole or even a quarter of the story. Such questions can only be answered within a broad historical framework that looks at race from a different angle, through the prism of capitalist production and class relations.

Labour and Racism attempts to set up such a framework. Annie Phizacklea and Robert Miles' explicit aim in this book is to understand the position of black labour in Britain's political process within a class *and* a racial context. In adopting this approach they are representative of recent trends in Marxist literature upon race which attempts to steer a delicate course between the twin pitfalls of a simplistic class analysis of race which ignores the colour of a worker's skin and only looks at production relations, and an equally one-sided racial analysis which only looks at power relations between black and white. The authors, correctly, attempt to show the interconnections between the two spheres — how racial oppression *limits* and *shapes* class oppression and vice versa.

This is a difficult path to tread and the early chapters of the book are not altogether successful in charting the links. The migrant status of black labour is taken as the starting point to explain how black labour was inserted into manual occupations at the bottom end of the class structure, by the demands of the British economy in the 1950s and 1960s. Ideological relations are seen to reinforce and maintain this economic position through the practices of racism and racial discrimination, thus constituting black labour as a subordinate fraction of the working class.

But the *links* between economic and ideological relations are not clearly drawn in the text. The reader is left with the impression that class relations exhaust the economic sphere, whilst racism forms an additional extra at the level of beliefs. Racism however, is rooted in the *economic* relationships of colonialism. It is the legacy of such relations that justifies the use of black labour today as a source of cheap labour. The stereotypes of superiority — inferiority embedded in colonial relations between white and black are drawn upon to justify contemporary racial divisions. Racism therefore, should not simply be seen as a postwar phenomenon which began with the arrival of black migrants in the 1950s, it underpinned and reinforced past economic relationships. Economic and ideological relations are thus historically linked and should not be analysed separately.

The book however, is more concerned with the present than with links to the past, in particular, with the relation between working class consciousness and racial consciousness among black and white workers. Based upon inteviews with male and female English and West Indian (migrant), semi-skilled workers in the North West London area, the authors produce evidence to dispel the notion that racism is the only force that structures black consciousness. Black labour does indeed confront racism at the workplace, but it does not structure *all* situations black people meet at the point of production. Their role as wage labour was found to produce a *restricted* class consciousness (based upon limited awareness of wage exploitation and lack of control over the work process) among both black and white workers. The high level of trade union membership among black workers, just over 50% nationally, compared to just under 50% for whites, can be cited in support of this point.

Membership of a trade union however, does not imply active participation within it. The presence of racism within the unions acts as a limiting factor upon black participation in union affairs. Such findings are behind the TUC's recent appeal, in the form of a 'Black Workers' Charter', to remove the barriers that restrict black representation at shop steward, regional and national levels of the unions.

Surprisingly, the extent to which racial

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discrimination encourages an *ethnic* as opposed to a class response is not well documented in the book. The point is made through the classic examples of the strikes at Imperial Typewriters and Mansfield Hosiery Ltd, but the extent of ethnic reaction goes far beyond these incidents. Most forms of reactions have occurred outside of the workplace, but are not unrelated to black experience within it.

In fact, the shortcomings of the study can be traced to the slender evidence upon which the authors hang their findings. Differences within Britain's black population in terms of class, ethnicity, age and skill are not sufficiently covered in the study to warrant generalisations about labour and racism. Asian reaction to the structures of class and racism, and how they differ from West Indian responses are not taken up. The role of the Indian Workers' Associations in promoting class interests and racial unity is a moot point here. A further omission is the absence of *skilled* West Indian workers from the sample, when they constitute a majority of the West Indian workforce.

Lastly, and perhaps more importantly, the book's preoccupation with black *migrant* labour glosses over the 40% of Britain's black population (cited by Runnymede Trust) who were born in this country, and do not necessarily share the same experiences or possess the same orientations to British society as their migrant counterparts. For example, the second generation, evident in the riots of Bristol and Brixton have shown themselves less willing than the migrant generation to accept the status of cheap labour or second class citizen.

Phizacklea and Miles failure to take account of divisions and differences within the black population stems from their overconcern to show the *class* basis of black migrant labour. Whilst a class analysis is essential to grasp the dynamics of race relations, it should not be accomplished at the expense of simplifying the complexities of black experience. The struggle against racism involves more than a grasp of the economic and ideological conditions that foster its growth among white workers, it also requires a knowledge of how black groups experience the effects of racism. To that end, *Labour and Racism* represents a limited advance in the field.

John Allen

ESSAYS ON REALISM
Georg Lukács
Ed by Rodney Livingstone
Lawrence and Wishart, 1980 hbk £9.95
ISBN 0 853 15517 8

Essays on Realism consists of six essays written by Georg Lukács and Anna Seghers dating from 1938/9. It thus gives us Lukács writing at the height of his powers, during the time that he composed *The Historical Novel*, and writing, too, during a period of social and political upheaval which had a profound impact on Marxist theory. Although much of Lukács's writing from this period has already been translated and anthologised, the reader who comes to this volume believing that he or she has already read Lukács's best work of the 1930s will be pleasantly surprised: these are in no sense essays of the second rank.

This is not to say, however, that there is anything strikingly new here: Lukács's work of this decade seems to be characterised by a remarkable consistency and homogeneity. Throughout the volume we are reminded of certain fundamental postulates in Lukács's work: the necessity for the writer to aim at a portrayal of social life in its *totality*, so as to dissolve the fetishism and reification that capitalist society thrives upon; the *formal* implications that this aim has for the writer with regard to such issues as plot, character, and narrative technique, and the necessary criticism of expressionism and modernism

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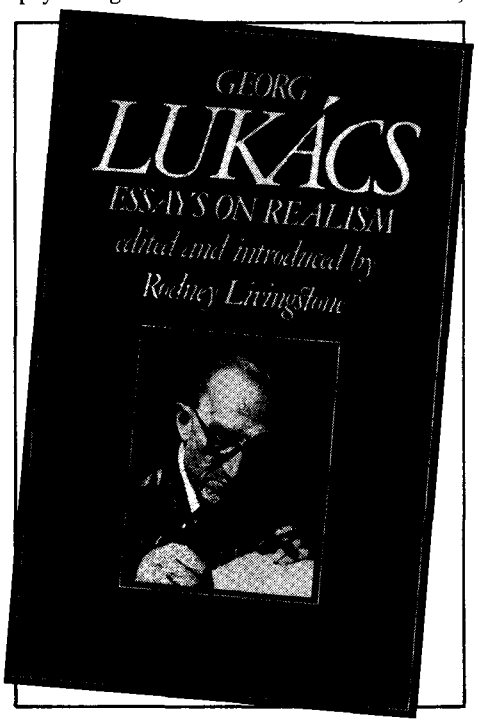
that follows from a strict adherence to these postulates.

Thus in the essay 'Reportage or Portrayal?' (1932), Lukács sees the 'reportage novel' and 'psychologism' as two sides of the same,



unsatisfactory, coin. 'Psychologism' is seen as the response of the bourgeois writer to an existing reality which appears mechanical, soulless and dominated by alien laws; the reportage novel in turn attempts to replace the triviality and escapism of psychologism with 'a purely social content'.

This technique of posing two polarised and equally unsatisfactory alternatives, so as to be able to argue for a dialectical synthesis which moves beyond both, is, as Rodney Livingstone points out in his excellent introduction to the volume, a favoured technique of Lukács's. It allows him, as in the essay already mentioned, to move to a recurrent position: the merciless criticism of any artistic method which portrays only a part of reality:

> Any partial truth that is separated from the whole and fixes rigidly on itself, while giving itself out as the whole truth, is necessarily transformed into a distortion of the truth. (p 55)

A recent critic has pointed out that Lukács always assumes that this responsibility of presenting 'the whole' rests firmly upon each individual work; Lukács never seems to consider the possibility that an individual literary work can perform a valuable function in illuminating an aspect of reality for a reader whose other reading and social experience can satisfactorily complement the partial nature of the view of reality given by such a work. Such 'incompleteness' is, for Lukács, always evidence of bourgeois reification, of the inability of the bourgeoisie to see reality whole.

It is this that leads directly to those formal assumptions of Lukács which have met with least sympathy from later Marxists. Lukács was aware of the dangers of reification of certain formal techniques; in *The Historical Novel* he refers to 'the misunderstanding that we intended a formal revival, an artistic imitation of the classical historical novel', adding decisively, 'That is impossible'. But on formal questions (and here his unwillingness to devote too much time to criticism of drama or poetry — or even film — rather than the novel is significant) Lukács always seems to return to the form of the 'classical historical novel' as his ideal. This is not to say that his criticisms of certain of the formal experiments of the modernists are not sharp and effective. Rodney Livingstone argues, correctly I feel, that Lukács's defence of the progressive potential of classical realism, and his humanist Marxist values, are of lasting importance. The following defence of 'plot and story' taken from the wide-ranging essay 'Marx and the Problem of Ideological Decay' makes a useful closing quotation from this important collection, and points to the force of Lukács's polemic.

> 'If decadent literature takes ever greater pains to eliminate plot and story from the literary aesthetic as 'obsolete', this is precisely a self-defence of the decadent tendencies. For the portrayal of a story, a real plot, leads inevitably to testing feelings and experiences against the external world, weighing the living interaction with social reality and finding this light or heavy, genuine or false, whereas the psychologistic or surrealistic introspection of the decadents (whether in the manner of Bourget or of Joyce) simply offers the superficial internal life a completely unrestricted field, entirely free from any criticism. The danger that arises from this false subjectivism, the uninhibited living-out of the writer's internality, is that he stands facing a world of free experiment in which he can mingle uninhibitedly as he will'. (p. 145)

Jeremy Hawthorn

NOTES

ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES FOR THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

John Kelly writes: The Alternative Economic Strategy, in one form or another, is now supported by many sections of the labour movement. It has recently become the focus for intense debate following the publication of books on the AES by London CSE, Sam Aaronovitch and Glyn and Harrison, and there are signs that some of these debates are beginning to focus on concrete issues such as inflation, import controls, investment finance etc. The aim of this conference on Alternative Strategies (to be held in London on October 17-18) is to provide a forum where intellectuals and activists can take these and related discussions somewhat further. The structure of the conference falls into two main parts: on Saturday October 17th, after an opening session by Bob Rowthorn, there will be a series of workshops examining some of the specific issues that are likely to arise in the course of implementing an alternative strategy. The Sunday sessions focus on the *ways* in which such a strategy can be implemented, looking at the role of the state, the trade unions, trades councils, local struggles and initiatives. Speakers include Tony Lane, Sheila Rowbotham, Judith Hunt, Adam Sharples, Mike Ward, Anna Coote, Hilary Wainwright and Tony Bunyan.

The Conference is sponsored by the Conference of Socialist Economists, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and *Marxism Today*. Full Registration costs £8 (£3 unemployed) for which you will receive conference papers. Registration forms are available from: John Kelly, Dept. of Industrial Relations, LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, Tel. 01-405 7686.

SOCIALIST ECONOMIC REVIEW

Ken Jones writes: Following its successful launch last year, *Socialist Economic Review* will be holding its second annual conference at Birkbeck College, London on September 19-20th.

Interest in the Alternative Economic Strategy is as intense as ever, and this year's conference will reflect the different aspects of current debate. Firstly, there are the major strategic questions, such as: does the AES provide an opportunity for widespread popular mobilisation? Will it succeed in transforming the economy in a socialist direction, or will it merely provoke an overwhelming reaction from capital? These will be some of the issues raised in a debate introduced by John Harrison and David Lipsey.

Secondly, there is the question of how the AES can link together different left and progressive forces. In particular, what is the

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Notes

relationship between the AES and the women's movement? Three papers at the Conference, including 'Socialist Feminism and the AES' by Sheila Smith and Jean Gardiner, will focus attention on this theme.

Thirdly, there are questions concerning the practicality and coherence of socialist economic policies. Does the Left really have a detailed idea of what policies should be implemented, and of the way to overcome the obstacles which will inevitably be confronted? These issues will be tackled in a series of workshops covering aspects as varied as collective bargaining and inflation; industrial policy; financial institutions; exchange rate policy; public expenditure control, and the role of taxation.

The whole conference will begin with three 'overview' papers looking at recent developments in the UK and in the international economy — including a session given by Domenico Mario Nuti on the significance of events in Poland. And the final session will take an equally topical look at progress by the GLC in implementing a Left industrial policy, with a discussion led by Mike Ward (GLC Industry and Employment Committee Chairperson).

Conference details from: SER, 36 Plimsoll Road, London N4 (Tel: 01-354 0013); or register at Harkness Hall, Malet Street at 9.30 am on September 19th. Conference fee £8 (unwaged £6).

ERRATA

In our August issue, an error changed the sense of the first sentence of the last paragraph in the left-hand column of p26 in Monty Johnstone's article. This should have read: . . . democratic supervision over the state apparatuses, . . .

Contributions to *Notes* (brief please) are welcome. We need copy by the 1st of the month preceding publication.

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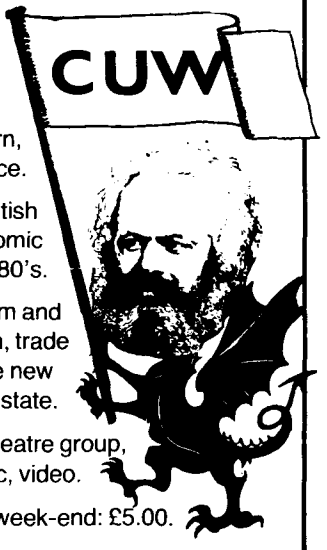

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